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**HISTORY OF ARMENIA**

**Volume I**

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NO.2

# HISTORY OF ARMENIA

By

V. C. VAHAN

VOLUME I



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To my sons

**VAHE and ARAM**

Who together with other English-speaking youth of Armenian descent may learn to value the priceless inheritance that the race has accumulated for them during three thousand years of heroic struggle for existence.



## PREFACE

American citizens of Armenian descent are sometimes confronted with this question: "What is your contribution to the great civilization this country is building?" Unfortunately there are very few who are in a position to answer such a question. Some who profess to love this country more than the descendants of the earliest settlers, are usually embarrassed by the fact that they are of foreign descent. A few have had the delusion that by adopting an Anglo-Saxon name they could solve the whole problem. Others, ignorant of the true greatness of the race that has given them birth, have felt humiliated at the mention of their origin. Some have thought that by burying the past and devoting all their energies to the present they can make themselves worthy of their adopted land. These people have tried to dodge the question, which whether asked audibly or implied, cannot be silenced and eventually must be answered.

No person can discover his own worth without analyzing his potentialities. But the individual being the product of the race, no real analysis can be made without the knowledge of his racial characteristics. These traits and characteristics of the race, developed through long years of variagated experiences, are inherited by the individual, who cannot discard them like a worn out garment. A man's actions, his capacity for ideas and ideals, and the formation of his character are determined to a great extent by this inheritance. The ability for self-analysis, therefore, is a prerequisite for intelligent action as well as for refinement.

With this idea foremost in my mind I venture to offer this book about the past of the Armenian race. I have presented in it facts and opinions taken from several well known sources in Armenian, English and French languages, refraining as much as possible from interpreting them. As most synthetic books of its kind it has some defects, yet I have made every effort to reproduce all known facts on the subject, submitting them to the judgment of the reader.

I feel that all my efforts will be amply rewarded if this book succeeds in arousing the interest of English-speaking Armenians in the past and present affairs of their race to whom they owe their personality and their existence.

V. C. VAHAN

January 10, 1936.  
Boston, Mass.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In preparing this history I have obtained information from ancient Armenian historians, from general books on ancient history, as well as from modern writers. Of the latter I must make special mention of Father Sahag Der Movsesian whose general outline I have followed; Leo, whose history of the Vannic kingdom deserves praise, and Prof. H. Manandian, whose excellent study of the feudal system in Armenia I found very helpful. For the chapter on Armenian paganism I have made extensive use of a treatise by the late Archbishop Elisee Tourian, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the late Prof. M. Ananikian's study of Armenian Mythology in the "Mythology of All Nations." Other sources, both modern and ancient, will be given separately in the second volume of the "HISTORY OF ARMENIA."

V. C. V.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE DAWN OF HISTORY

Near East Civilizations.—Geography.—Neighboring Countries and Peoples.—Hittites, Phrygians, Assyrians, Persians etc.—Ancient Inhabitants of Armenia.—The Harri.—Nairi-Urartuans.—Armens. Origin of the Race.—Traditional History.

The origin of the races of the Near East, most of them long since extinct, is still just beyond historical vision. During the last century archaeologists have made new and highly important discoveries about the various peoples who lived and developed their distinct civilizations in western Asia, but these discoveries are still incomplete and there is a great deal of history hidden under the soil of the Near East, which, when uncovered completely, will give a more accurate picture of the races, living or dead, who lived and prospered in what is known as the "cradle of civilization."

From historical records we learn that three great civilizations were developed in the Near East almost at the very dawn of history. Egypt and Mesopotamia were the first countries where man first emerged from barbarous stage and gradually developed a social life, a government, arts and sciences, and a form of writing. Some centuries later the Hittites created their own civilization in Asia Minor. It is only natural that all the other races and peoples of the Near East would

have been influenced by these advanced countries, whose armies frequently invaded the smaller states and brought them under their domination.

### GEOGRAPHY

Armenia, due to her geographical position, could not be an exception to this rule. Being situated at the gateway between Asia and Europe, Armenia was not only liable to be attacked by its powerful neighbors in the east and south, but was constantly in the way of invading hordes from Central Asia or Southern Europe. This was one of the geographic misfortunes of the country and it played a decisive role in the history of its inhabitants. The mountainous nature of the country also influenced the fate of the people, as did the watersheds and the directions in which the rivers flowed.

Armenia proper or historical Armenia is situated on the east of Asia Minor between the Caucasus Mountains and the Anti-Taurus Range, the Caspian Sea and the Anatolian Plateau. The country itself constitutes a vast Plateau with a mean elevation of 6000 feet. On the north and south the tableland descends abruptly into the Black Sea and the Mesopotamian plain respectively. On the east it joins the Iranian Plateau and in the west it descends gradually into the Anatolian tableland.

High mountains intersperse the whole Plateau, the highest peak being the famous Mount Ararat, the resting place of Noah's Ark according to the Bible. It rises like a solid mass in the center of Armenia. The Armenians call it Massis the "free" or the

"noble," and in their legends they make it the dwelling place of the spirits. Its snow-clad summit rises to a height of 18,900 feet, majestically dominating the whole plain which bears its name. Beside the giant stands the Little Ararat which, in spite of its height of 13,200 feet, looks like a dwarf in comparison with the noble mountain. Further north between the rivers Kur or Cyrus and Araxes there is another giant, Mount Aragatz, the "white glory," which rises to a height of more than 13,500 feet. In the south there is Mount Nephates or Npat with an altitude of 11,900 feet, and Mount Sipan near Lake Van rises to a height of 13,000 feet. The picturesque Biurakn (thousand springs) with its height of 12,300 feet, Parkhar with 12,140 feet, Nemrut, nestling a beautiful lake in the place of its extinct crater and rising to a height of almost 12,000 feet; Thandurek and Tsaghgantz, each attaining an altitude of 12,000 feet, and numerous other smaller peaks covering the country from one end to the other, give the land a majestic and sometimes forbidding appearance.

No less famous is Armenia for its rivers. In addition to its countless streams and brooks which abound in every district, it has large and navigable rivers which have their names written indelibly in the history and literature of mankind. Of these the most famous are the Euphrates and the Tigris, both having their sources in the Carinia region and both flowing south through Assyria and Babylonia into the Persian Gulf, thus creating in the desert a great fertile valley known by the name of Mesopotamia which means "between two rivers." The Halys and the



Chorokh flow north and empty themselves into the Black Sea. But the real Armenian river is the Araxes or Aras, the "Mother Arax," which is inseparable from the name of the country or its inhabitants. The Araxes too has its source in the watery Carinia region, at Mount Abos, south of modern Erzerum. It winds its course through the plains of Pasiane and Ararat and after flowing in a south-easterly direction to the Persian border changes its course to northeast and passing from rapid to rapid rushes into the Caspian plain where it joins the Kur and together they empty themselves into the Caspian Sea.

The country also abounds in lakes. Most of these perched upon high tablelands greatly enhance the natural beauty of the country. The largest Armenian lakes are three in number and are called seas in the Armenian. These are Lake Van (Sea of Bznuni), Lake Kaputan (Urmia) and Lake Sevan or the Sea of Kegham. The last one is not only one of the most beautiful lakes of the world, but has also one of the most delicious fishes, called the Prince fish, and relished by every gourmet. Many other smaller lakes cover the mountains giving them the appearance of gem-studded crowns.

The climate is as uneven as the surface of the land. It is a strange mixture of excessive heat in summer and extreme cold in winter. This makes possible a wide range of vegetation in Armenia.

### NEIGHBORING PEOPLES

In addition to these natural factors the fate of Armenia was also greatly influenced by the neigh-

boring countries and peoples. There are no records about the inhabitants of Armenia in the earliest times. They first come into written history about fifteen centuries before our era, when the country is called Urartu. Before that time Hittite records call the region, that later came to be known as Armenia Major, by the name of Harri, while Armenia Minor is given the name of Gasga. These names are found as far back as two thousand years before Christ, and the inhabitants of these regions might have had ties of kinship with the Hittites or Khatti, as we find them in alliance with this great Power of Asia Minor during most of their history.

The Khatti, situated to the west and south-west of Armenia, ruled over most of Asia Minor. Their history begins about the first century of the third millennium before Christ and comes down to 1200 B.C. Their language has finally been classified among the Indo-Europeans. They have left many inscriptions in widely separated places in Asia Minor, Syria and even Palestine. They were the traditional enemies of Babylonians and Assyrians and they fought with the Egyptians in many great battles. At one time Babylon was captured by the Hittite king and the name of the Khatti became known all over the civilized world of that time.

A new tide of immigration from Europe, of which the fall of Troy was only an incident, swept eastward and southward into Asia Minor and in the beginning of the twelfth century before Christ the mighty empire of the Khatti was finally overwhelmed by the invading European tribes. Modern ethnologists iden-

tify these invaders with Thracians, among whom were also Phrygians and Armenians. In an Assyrian record there is mention of a people called Muski, with whom they came into conflict on the Hittite frontier, upon the Euphrates river, as far back as the twelfth century before Christ. Four hundred years later the Muski appear on Assyrian records as a people who were established within the eastern part of the Taurus Mountains. The curious part of this inscription is the fact that the Muski leader's name is given as Mita, which is identical with the throne name of Phrygian kings as actually found upon their own inscriptions.

There is little direct historical evidence about the immigration of the Phrygians and their movements in Asia Minor. The main features of their movements, however, may be inferred from their monuments as well as from Greek literature. It is very probable that the first Phrygian immigrants may have reached the river Sangarius (Sakara) even before the fall of Troy. They came in irresistible bands of mail-clad warriors from Macedonia and Thrace and eventually established themselves on the sources of the Sangarius.\* Defended by their armor they carried all before them so that they appeared in Greek tradition as a race of heroes whose kings were the associates of Gods and whose language was not only the most ancient but the speech of the goddess herself.\*\*

Before the Phrygians had time to develop their

\* Cf. Homer, *Iliad*, iii 187; xvi 719.

\*\* Homer, *Hym Aphr.* 111. Note also how modern Armenians boast of their language as being not only the most ancient but the vernacular that Jehovah used in his speech with Adam.

civilization in their new country another European immigration began to roll over Asia. About the middle of the eighth century the Cimmerians and the Scythians from southern Russia forced their way through the Caucasus Mountains into Armenia, spreading terror and devastation before them. The Vannic kingdom of Urartu in southern Armenia was the first important victim that succumbed before this fierce and irresistible onslaught. Further south, meeting with strong resistance on the part of the Assyrians, the invaders changed their course and continued westward into Asia Minor. Another stream of the same tide, which had come across the Bosphorus, met their kin about 710 B.C. and the united forces of these European barbarians established a reign of terror in these highly civilized countries of Asia for nearly fifty years.

The Phrygian kingdom must have fallen before this invincible force, although we find no records of the details of its destruction. We know, however, that the last king Midas, after being defeated on every front, committed suicide and the Phrygians ceased to exist as an independent people.

The last Near Eastern state which was nurtured on Khattic civilization was Lydia. Situated on the west of the Phrygian kingdom it had at one time been part of the Empire of the Hittites. The Lydians had an organized state even at the time when the Phrygians were at the height of their power. No doubt they too must have struggled with the destructive forces of the Cimmerians, but they survived their ordeal and we find them after the fall of Nineveh, the proud

capital of Assyria, in 607 B. C., the masters of the western part of Asia Minor from the River Halys to the Ionian Sea. The last king of Lydia, the fabulously rich Croesus, whose name has become synonymous to great wealth, was actually building an empire on the old Hittite lines when suddenly Cyrus, the king of Media, appeared upon the scene. After a vain struggle against this young power of the east, Sardis, the capital of Lydia and King Croesus were captured by Cyrus and thus the last inheritor of the Khattic civilization vanished from the horizon of history.

To the south of Armenia lies the plain of Mesopotamia. Here, at the very dawn of history, we find the City States of Sumer and Akkad vying with each other for supremacy over the southern portion of the plain where both cities were situated. From the records they have left it is evident that they were not of the same race. The Akkadians were Semites, but the origin of Sumerians is still open to conjecture. After several centuries of struggle between Sumer and Akkad a new City State comes upon the scene and taking advantage of the weakened condition of the rival cities dominates the whole southern Mesopotamia. This was Babylon, which, in due course, developed into an empire expanding to east, north and west. Much later, about the beginning of the fifteenth century before Christ, another Semitic kingdom was established in northern Mesopotamia and it grew into a mightier empire. This new kingdom was called Assyria after the name of their chief deity, Assur, and their capital, Nineveh, became the proudest metropolis of the ancient times. Another Babylonian

kingdom came into existence about the ninth century B. C. under the name of Chaldea.

To the east of Mesopotamia was a mountainous country known under the name of Elam. The Elamites were in constant warfare with their more civilized neighbors in the lowlands, but they were mostly under the domination or influence of Babylonia.\*

Elam later became part of Persia. So did Media which was situated on the southeastern border of Armenia. The Medes were Aryans and they became famous under their king Cyaxeres, who captured Nineveh in 607 B.C. But the Median kingdom was short-lived as Cyrus, the Persian king, succeeded to the throne of Media and uniting the two countries put the foundation of the mighty Achaemenian dynasty.

To the north and northeast of Armenia there were several small kingdoms, the more important ones being the Georgians, the Albani and the Alans. They were kindred races to the pre-Armenian population and they are classified as Alorodians, which is a corrupted form of Araratians. They were usually in alliance with the people of Armenia and most of the time were either under actual domination or under the influence of Armenians.

These were the neighbors with whom the inhabitants of Armenia were destined to live and to fight. The proto-Armenians being of kindred stock as the Hittites they were allied with the latter with ties of friendship. But the kingdoms of Mesopotamia

\* Babylonia is here used to denote the southern States of Mesopotamia separately or collectively.



looked upon them as potential enemies and many wars of conquest were fought in the Armenian highlands by most of the great Assyrian kings. And when Persia became a great Power the subjugation of Armenia was a matter of vital importance to her, so that the ties of kinship did not prevent a series of wars between them. Later empires, such as that of Alexander the Great and his successors, of Rome and of Byzantium, especially the rivalry of the latter with the Persians, made of Armenia a bloody battleground and cost the Armenians many precious lives. So did the invasions and domination of the Arabs and in the comparatively more recent times the onslaught of barbarous tribes from Central Asia. The coming of the Turks was the climax of the Armenian tribulation, most of which can easily be attributed to the geographic situation of the country, as if to prove the theory that "history is a result of geography."

#### ANCIENT INHABITANTS

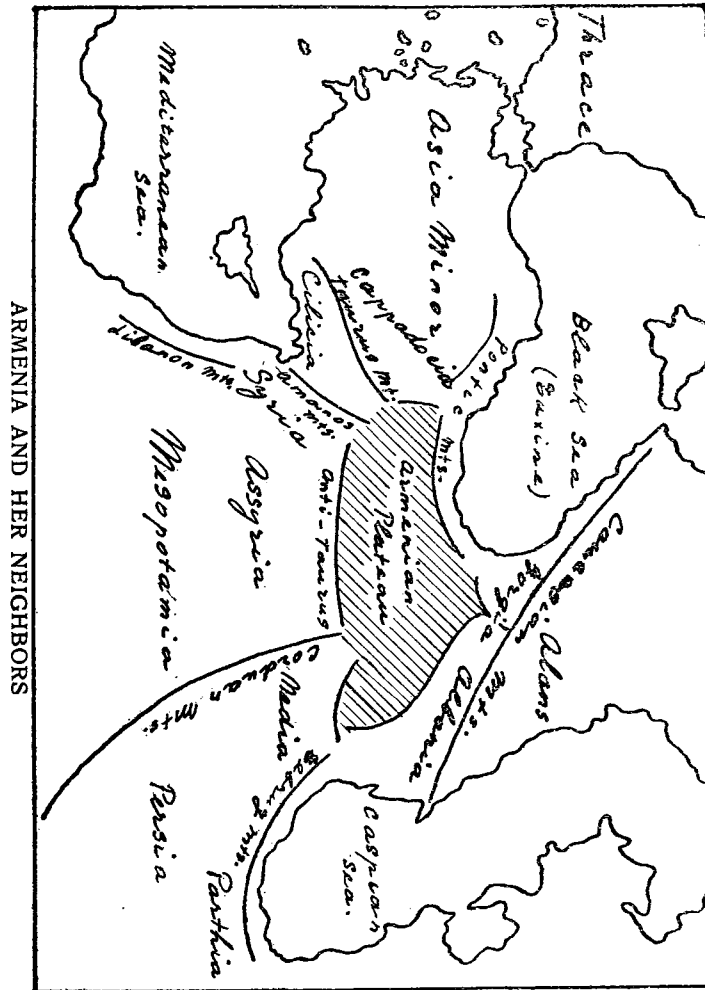
The inhabitants of Armenia in very ancient times are supposed to have been of the same race as the Hittites or Khatti. In the historical records the latter have left there is frequent mention of a country to their east which they call the land of the Harri (possibly pronounced Kharri). These same records reveal a sort of buffer state between the Khatti and the Harri which is called the land of Gasga and which is located somewhere between the river Halys and the river Euphrates. Gasga, then, would have been situated

in Armenia Minor and the location of Harri would be in Armenia proper or Armenia Major as the Romans later called it.

There is very little known about these peoples. The few bits of information come from the Hittite records which reveal the fact that in the early stages of the Khattic history the Harrians were allied with their rivals, the Khattians, against another political combination composed of Egypt and Mitanni, a state of northern Mesopotamia. These alliances shifted in accordance to the times and changed conditions, so that at another time we find the Harri fighting against the Hittites, who in all probability were of the same stock as themselves. It is also evident that the Harrians were supreme among the peoples beyond the Euphrates as far as the Caucasus mountains. At a later period, after the rise of Assyria upon the ruins of Mitanni, we find the new kingdom in alliance with the Harrians.

The information about the Harrians is so meagre that practically nothing more than the mention of their alliances, their raids and the counter-raids of their neighbors into each other's territory, and some of their battles can be found in the records so far unearthed. Even in the Khattic inscriptions, that have been brought to light, there are many names of places and of peoples that are still unidentified. There is, for instance, the name Ariwanna which might perhaps someday be identified with modern Erivan. Future investigations might shed much light upon the obscure past of the land of Harri.

The Assyrian records at a much later date are much more explicit about the inhabitants of Armenia



and their relations with the great empire to their south. The first mention of the country is found in an inscription of King Salmanassar I (cir. 1330-1316 B. C.), who after invading the country had his exploits inscribed on the rocky banks of the Subnates River in southern Armenia. The Assyrian inscription calls the country the lands of the Niri (Nairi) and later records give it another name—Uratu. The lands of Nairi or Urartu, inhabited by a race akin to the Hittites, received much alien blood both by foreign invasions and by wholesale import of foreign peoples by their kings in the heyday of their power, when they too, having conquered other lands, brought the inhabitants into Armenia as captives. So in the course of time into the Khattic stock were grafted Semitic blood both from Assyria and Palestine, Aryan blood from the Barbaric European invaders, as well as from the Iranians and other non-descript Asiatic tribes.

Some immigrants came of their own accord as political refugees, as in the case of the two sons of the Assyrian King Sennacherib, who in a family feud having murdered their father were pursued by their brother, and escaping from their native land took refuge in Armenia and were received with generous hospitality by the Urartuans and given great estates for themselves and their numerous followers. The two Assyrian princes were called Sannassar and Adramelik and according to an Armenian legend they became the founders of a great princely house, having been completely assimilated by the natives in the course of time.

In Urartuan inscriptions there is another mention of infusion of foreign blood into the country. In recounting the exploits of King Argistis I of Urartu the inscription tells how this great king brought 22,274 persons—men, women and children—as captives after a campaign in Cappadocia against the Hittites. These were settled in the capital city of Van. It is also recorded that many Jews came and settled in Armenia both before and after the fall of Babylon.

Strange as it may seem, almost up to the beginning of the fifth century before Christ, nowhere has the name Armenia been found mentioned. The historical record where we find the word for the first time is the Behistun inscription of Darius Hystaspes, the king of Persia, written in 521 B.C. Carved upon a rocky slope of a mountain at Behistun in Persia, the inscription recounts the exploits of the great king in three languages—Persian, Elamese and Assyrian. It is in the Persian version that the word Armina is used for the Urartu of the Assyrian version.

## ORIGIN OF ARMENIANS

So in the sixth century before Christ something must have happened to bring about a change in the name of the country. There is no direct evidence about the event or events that caused this change but there are several theories formulated by Armenian and European scholars to explain not only the transformation of name but the very origin of the Armenian race.

The controversy among the scholars about the origin of the Armenians is still unsettled. It is beyond the scope of this book to enter into that controversy. We will only present some more or less prevailing views on the subject with a warning to the reader against dogmatic controversialists, as new discoveries might completely change one or all the theories that are now being advanced.

The first point in this controversy is the question whether the Armenians are an Asiatic or a European race. Herodotus, the first Greek historian, who is universally acclaimed as the Father of History, speaks of the origin of the Armenians in no uncertain terms and definitely identifies them as descendants of a Greek tribe, the Phrygians, who migrated into Asia Minor from Thrace. Of the latter Herodotus says that "according to Macedonian account the Phrygians, during the time that they had their abode in Europe and dwelt with them in Macedonia, bore the name of Brigians. But on their removal to Asia they changed their designation." And in describing the conglomerate races that composed the great army of king Xerxes of Persia, which had crossed the Hellespont to invade Greece in the fifth century before Christ, the Greek historian says: "The Armenians, who are Phrygian colonists, were armed in the Phrygian fashion."\* While Strabo, another well known Greek historian, considers the Armenians as descendants of a Thesalian chieftain, Armenus, who accompanied Jason in his quest of the Golden Fleece to Colchis on the southeastern shore of the Euxine (the Black Sea).

\* Herodotus VII, 73.

Koriun, an ancient Armenian historian, goes a step further than his Greek colleagues, and makes the Phrygians descend from Aschanaz, a native of Armenia, thus confirming the common origin of the two races in an inverted order.

Another evidence of the kinship between the Armenians and the Greeks is seen by some in an old Hellenic legend according to which Deocalion was the father of Hellenes and Andropomus, the former becoming the forefather of the Hellenic race and the latter of the Armenians.

The theory opposed to this is the legendary history of the Armenians as recorded by Moses of Khorene, the father of Armenian History. According to this source Haik, a great-great-grandson of Noah (the builder of the Ark of the Scriptures), was the forefather of the Armenians. Haik's forbears migrated from Armenia to Mesopotamia (Sumer). Here Haik built cities for himself and his followers and was well on his way toward becoming a ruler when another chieftain, named Belus, invaded his territory and wanted to impose upon him his rule. Haik, after fighting with the invader, finally decided to return to his native land, where with the aid of his followers he established himself as a king. Thus it was that the people were called Hai or Haik after him and the country received the designation of Haiotz Yergir (the land of Haik), which was later Iranianized into Haiastan. One of his descendants was King Aram who became a great conqueror and imposed his rule upon neighboring countries. By his conquests the prestige of Aram was so enhanced that the country came to

be known by his name as Armenia and the inhabitants as Armenians.

Most of modern historians and ethnologists accept the ancient Greek rather than the ancient Armenian theory as to the origin of the Armenian race. Some scholars have tried to trace the immigration of the race from Europe to its final destination by the records they have left on their way. Thus, it has been brought out that there was a town in Thessaly called Armenion.\* In Bythania, the first stopping place of the Phrygians in Asia Minor, we find a Mount Ormonion. We find another Mount Armonion by the sources of the River Halys, which is to the east of Armenia Minor. At Sinope, on the Black Sea, there was the harbor of Armene. All these names are used to prove the theory that the Armenians gave their names to places they passed through in their long and slow journey from the north of Greece to the Plain of Ararat.

Another proof as to the European origin of the Armenians is sought in their religion, which was un-Asiatic both in conception and form. It is true that they borrowed or adopted the gods of the Assyrians, of the Persians and of the Greeks, but what they borrowed was the name of deities and forms of worship. All these foreign borrowings were nationalized and adapted to their own concept of religion which was of a higher plane than those of Asiatic peoples.

Language is considered another important evidence for tracing the origin of a people. The Armenian language has indisputably been placed in the Indo-

\* Strabo XI, 4, 8.

European group of tongues. There are words, however, in the Armenian language that do not belong to the Indo-European. This fact has been explained by the theory that these words were contributed to the Armenian by the native element after the country was occupied by the tribe of Armens. Prof. Lehmann-Haupt, a well known authority on Armenians, thinks that the race is composed of the two elements—the Indo-European Armenians and the Asia Minor Haik. For it must be remembered that the race has a dual designation, as it is called Armenian by foreigners and Hai or Haik in the native vernacular.

If we accept this theory, then we can explain the origin of the Armenians by the method of deduction as follows: A Greek tribe with a name like Armen or Ormen migrates into Asia Minor from Thrace sometime between the thirteenth and eleventh centuries before Christ. They are gradually moving eastward. Some centuries later another European invasion of Asia Minor takes place. The new invaders are not like the first ones. They are fierce fighters and spread ruins before them. Soon they create a state of anarchy throughout Asia Minor by overthrowing all organized governments and substituting brute force for law and order. The Armens, who have been living some sort of semi-nomadic life, must have been spared much of the destruction wrought by the Cimmerians, as they could have easily gone up to their mountain fastnesses with their herds. As the invaders were moving westward the Armens must have considered it wise to move eastward. Crossing the River Euphrates they come to the land of Urartu. They find the country



HAIK, THE LEGENDARY FOUNDER OF THE  
ARMENIAN RACE

devastated and the people disorganized and demoralized. Somehow they take possession of the country and establish their rule over it. Those natives who put up a resistance are finally routed and the rest are soon assimilated. As the Urartuans are an agricultural people and the new comers are herdsmen, the subsequent civilization becomes a combination of the two types. The natives soon learn the language of the invaders and a new name develops for the mixed population who by intermarriage are eventually molded into one race. Thus the origin of the names Armenian and Hai is easily explained—at least theoretically. . . .

Whether we accept this theory or not it seems to be a well established fact that at the beginning of the sixth century B.C. Armenia was in a chaotic state and there were hostile races who were fighting each other for supremacy. This internecine war could have resulted in the complete annihilation of the whole population had not outside intervention, in the form of foreign rule imposed upon the country, brought law and order to the war-weary inhabitants. So the subjugation of Armenia by King Cyrus of Persia in 585 B.C. can be considered as a providential act in that it not only brought peace to the people, but gave an opportunity for the warring elements to get closer to each other and in the course of a peaceful period to become united into one people.

#### LEGENDARY HISTORY

Armenian traditional history was preserved for posterity by the historian Moses of Khorene, who is

supposed to have lived in the fifth century A.D. The history that Moses of Khorene wrote is a literary masterpiece but not so accurate as to the authenticity of the historical facts it presents. The historian must have taken his data from the legends and the ballads that had come down by tradition to his times. Moreover he, as well as his contemporary writers, being devout Christians, made over-zealous efforts to connect their race with Biblical tradition.

It is not surprising, therefore, to discover in this history that the founder of the Armenian race was a great-great-grandson of Noah. Haik, the first patriarchal leader of the Armenians, was the son of Togarmah, the son of Gomer, the son of Japheth, the son of Noah. After the deluge had subsided Japheth went south and settled down in Sumer. We find his great-grandson Haik as the chief of the Japhethian tribe during the erection of the Tower of Babel. After this stupendous enterprise was abandoned another chieftain of Semitic origin (possibly an Akkadian) begins to tyrannize the people. Bel or Belus, the tyrant, not only wants to dominate his neighbors but he actually wants them to worship him as their God. There is a revolt. Haik, too, is among the rebels. Rather than submit to such tyranny he prefers to leave the country and seek his fortune elsewhere. So gathering his tribe he migrates north and arrives in Armenia, whence his great-grandfather Japheth had come. But Belus would not leave him in peace. Gathering an army around him the Semitic autocrat pursues Haik into Armenia where they engage in a battle on the shores of Lake Van. The Assyrians are defeated and their

haughty chief is slain by Haik himself. After this great victory Haik settles down in Armenia with all his followers, who come to be known by his name.

Thus an Armenian or Hai state is established and Haik and his descendants become the ruling princes. They build up the country and gradually expand into the surrounding territories. For six generations they devote their energies to peaceful constructive work until Aram comes upon the scene.

Aram is a great-great-great-great-grandson of Haik. By his time the country has grown. There are already a number of ruling princes in Armenia. Aram is a good diplomat and he succeeds in bringing all these rulers together and forming a federation under his leadership. Organizing an army Aram invades Media and defeating her annexes a part of Median territory. His next conquest is in Assyria. Then he turns to his neighbor in the west, Cappadocia, and occupies the whole country. His rule extends into the very heart of Asia Minor, as far as Caesaria, which is built by the military governor of the occupied country, a General Meshak, and named after him Mazaca. The name Caesaria was given it much later probably by Claudius Caesar. Aram finally makes a treaty of alliance with the king of Babylon and Assyria, by name of Ninus(?), who sends him a Crown of pearls and accepts him as second only to himself. King Aram's exploits were instrumental, according to Moses of Khorene, in making the outside world recognize his people as Arameans or Armenians.

The next episode in this history is a narrative of the love or passion of a sensuous foreign queen for a

virtuous and loyal married man who happens to be the King of Armenia. He is none other than Ara, the Handsome, son and successor of Aram, and the woman in the case is beautiful Semiramis, the reigning Queen of Assyria. Ara was indeed very handsome and his renown soon reached the ears of the passionate southern queen. At once she sent her emissaries to the Armenian King with an offer of marriage through which he would become the ruler of the entire Assyrian Empire. Ara, however, loved his own wife, Nuard, and was loyal to her. So he sent the Assyrian emissaries back with the noble declaration that he would not sacrifice his honor to attain power. Semiramis felt jilted and avowed to wreak her vengeance on the man who had humiliated her by his refusal of her offer. So she invaded Armenia with a great army and engaged in a battle with the forces of Ara. The queen gave strict orders to her officers to capture the handsome king alive and bring him to her unharmed. During the fight when king Ara saw that his army was being defeated he went into the ranks of his common soldiers and was killed with them. The impassioned queen employed every means to resuscitate the dead king, but in vain. The Armenians began to fight more fiercely to avenge the death of their beloved ruler. Then Semiramis thought of a ruse to deceive the foe. Dressing one of her own officers in the armor of the dead king she displayed him before the people and told them that the gods had revived their king. Only thus was she able to conquer the country.

After the death of Ara Armenia becomes a semi-

independent country. The kings or the ruling princes pay a tribute to the Assyrian rulers. The names of more than a score of these rulers are mentioned in the history of Moses of Khorene. Then during the time of the rise of Media into power Baruir, a contemporary of king Cyaxares of Media, allies himself with the latter and the king of Babylon, and the united armies march upon the Assyrian Empire and finally capture Nineveh. As a reward for his assistance Baruir is given the right to wear a crown in addition to the loot he takes with him from the capital of Assyria.

The alliance between the three kingdoms remains for a long period. Hrachia, the son of Baruir, is mentioned for giving his assistance to king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia in the latter's campaign against the Jews, which resulted in the destruction of the Hebrew kingdom. The successors of Hrachia have no exploits credited to them until we come to the name Tigranes.

The story of Tigranes I reads like an oriental tale. He was a brave man and a great fighter for which qualities he was greatly admired by Cyrus, the young king of Persia. Cyrus was the grandson of Azhdahak, the king of Media. Azhdahak was of a suspicious nature and he looked askance at the friendship of the two young princes. Then Azhdahak dreamed one night that a beautiful woman was giving birth to three fully grown men upon a snow-clad Armenian mountain. The first one mounted a lion and rode westward, the second marched to north on the back of a leopard, while the third mounting



a dragon invaded Media and coming to the royal temple tried to destroy the images to which he, Azhdahak, was offering sacrifices. When he tried to prevent him, the rider of the dragon drew his sword and slew him. In the morning Azhdahak called all his wise men and magicians and asked them for an interpretation of the dream. They told him that young Tigranes was a real danger to Media and advised him to marry the sister of the Armenian king, so that he could do away with Tigranes through her. Then Azhdahak sent emissaries to Armenia with many precious gifts and asked Tigranes for the hand of his sister Tigranuhi. The Armenian king presently consented to the marriage and sent his sister to Ecbatana, the capital of Media. Ashdahak won the confidence of Tigranuhi by his affected kindness and graciousness. Gradually he began to rouse her against her brother by saying that Zaruhi, Tigranes' wife was very ambitious and was actually urging her husband to deprive his own sister and brother-in-law of their throne. Then he openly proposed to Tigranuhi to help him dispose of Tigranes before he had time to do the same to themselves. The queen, being a shrewd woman, pretended to have been fooled but secretly informed her brother of the plot. So, when Ashdahak asked his brother-in-law to a conference at a place near the frontier, Tigranes came with his army and after a bloody battle the Median king was slain by Tigranes.

Another important king in this legendary history is Vahagn, the son of Tigranes. He is a counterpart of Hercules or Herakles, the Greek legendary hero. He fought and vanquished not only strong and brave

men, but also dragons. His exploits were sung in popular ballads and like his Hellenic counterpart he was deified and worshipped not only by the Armenians but by the Georgians as well.

Some more names of kings are mentioned by Moses of Khorene, but none are given much importance. The last of this line of kings is called Vahe, who is supposed to have put up a valiant fight against the forces of Alexander of Macedon, but was finally defeated by him. With him ends the independence of the country and Armenia remains under Macedonian rule for one hundred and fifty years, until Valarsaces, the Parthian, founds the Arsacid or Arshakuni Dynasty.

The Armenian historian says that it was this king Valarsaces who sent a scholar to Babylon to do research work about the past of the Armenian race. The man returned with certain records which are purported to be what Moses of Khorene has given us.

## CHAPTER II

### PROTO-ARMENIANS

#### NAIRI—URARTU—BIAINA

The origin of the people.—Their political divisions.—Social order —Religion.—Assyrian Invasions before the IX century B.C.—The Rise of Urartu.—Arame.—Sarduris I.—Ispuinis.—Menuas I.—Argistis.—Sarduris II.—Rusas I.—The later Kings.—The Urartu Civilization.

As we have already seen, Asia Minor was inhabited in the third and the second millenniums before Christ by a non-Semitic people called Khatti or Hittites. We do not know whether the earliest inhabitants of Armenia belonged to this race, but it seems quite certain now that in the second millennium Khattic races were inhabiting not only Armenia but the Caucasian countries as well, as far east as the Caspian Sea. The ancient Greeks called these Caucasian peoples "Alarodians," which is another form of Araratian. Modern ethnologists have coined a new name for them—Japhethians—and it is generally accepted that they are of the same stock as the Hittites and that they came originally from Asia Minor.

We do not know whether all the tribes inhabiting the Armenian Plateau had a common racial name. When the Assyrians first invaded the country in the fourteenth century before Christ they found there numerous kings, each ruling in a small area. In their

inscriptions the country is called the lands of Nairi, but there is no national designation for the whole people. From other sources we learn that the people of Nairi called themselves Khaldians, after their chief god Khaldis. Later we find the name Urartu applied to the country by the Assyrians, while the inscriptions of Vannic kings refer to their state as the Kingdom of Biaina. As we shall see later Urartu was one of the numerous kingdoms that gained supremacy over the others and gave its name to a large part of the country for several centuries. For that reason it would not be appropriate to call the people Urartuans. Probably the best designation for the inhabitants of Armenia, before the country came to be known by that name, would be Proto-Armenians. In this work, however, we will be guided by the records of the period under discussion and the name applied to the country or the people at that particular period.

We have very little information about these tribes living in Armenia before the fifteenth century. That they were divided into minute political divisions we learn from the Assyrian inscriptions after their first invasion. It is also evident from this same source that these tribes or clans, although living independently, could and did form a federation for defensive purposes. Beyond that we know practically nothing about their social, political or religious life, nor of the interrelationship of the tribes or the kingdoms of the Proto-Armenians.

Beginning with the ninth century, however, with the appearance of Urartu upon the scene, we find a different picture. At this period they succeed in creat-

ing not only a strong centralized government, but actually they bring forth a civilized state, a co-ordinated religious system, and they display cultural attainments of no mean calibre. With the records they have left us, and with those of the Assyrians, it has been possible to reconstruct their history and their civilization some twenty-five hundred years after their downfall.

### NUMEROUS KINGDOMS

Before giving the history of this valiant people let us have a glance at the Nairi lands and their political divisions. Taking Lake Van as the centre of the Nairi lands we shall classify the numerous small states into several large groups, showing their geographical positions in relation to the lake.

1. **Manna.**—This was a group of states to the east of Lake Van covering the western shore of Lake Urmia from its southern end to the Araxes River. They do not seem, however, to be of the same stock as the other Nairi peoples.

2. **Musassir.**—An important country to the southeast of the lake corresponding to the northern Kurdistan of the modern times. The capital city of the same name was a religious centre, where the famous Temple of Khaldis was located. The people were closely allied with other Nairi peoples.

3. **Hubushkia.**—Another country with Nairite population, situated strategically on the Assyrian border, to the south of Lake Van. Between the lake and Hubushkia there were two small countries called Gilzani and Arzana.

4. **Kashiari and Nirbu.**—Two inaccessible mountainous countries to the southwest of Lake Van, corresponding to modern Kurdistan.

5. **Bit-Zamani.**—This country was in the valley of the western branch of the Tigris, to the west of Kashiari, containing the important city of Amet (Diarbekir). Assyrian colonies were established in this country and the city of Dush-ha became the administrative seat of Assyrian governors. It was to this city that the Nairi kings sent their tribute to be delivered to the representative of the Assyrian king. Bit-Zamani as well as the neighboring countries of Shupria and Urume were inhabited by Aramean (Semitic) races.

6. **Kirhu.**—In a westerly direction from Lake Van, beyond the land of Mushki, was the Kirhu country which contained the Enzit district, which is now known by the name of Kharpert or Harput. The River Subnates, which served as a passage for several Assyrian invasions of Nairi was located in this country.

7. **Urartu.**—Before Urartu supplanted Nairi as the name of most of the countries enumerated above, it must have been the designation of a small country. At least that is the contention of many scholars. As this name does not appear in the Assyrian records until the ninth century, many modern historians think that the Urartuans migrated to Nairi lands about that time from Asia Minor, driven eastward by the tide of Thracian immigration from the west. It is generally accepted that they settled to the north of Lake Van and soon became the dominant power in

the Nairi lands. Others contend that Urartu was situated further north, in the Plain of Ararat, whence they descended south and finally established their capital in the city of Tuspa, on the eastern shore of Lake Van.

The controversy about the word Urartu itself is interesting. It is considered to be a corrupted form of Ararat. On the other hand the modern Mount Ararat, which the Armenians have always called Massis, is not the Ararat of the Bible upon which Noah's Ark landed. Mount Ararat of the Scriptures was in the vicinity of Lake Van, and when the name was applied to the northern peak all the traditional stories connected with it were likewise transferred to the new Ararat.

**Northern Countries.**—Of the Nairi lands in the north we mention the important ones as found in the Vannic inscriptions:

**Daiaeni.**—Modern Erzerum and Pasiane districts.

**Etiuni.**—Modern Vanand District.

**Azani.**—District at the foot of Mount Aragads.

**Irdanuini.**—Country lying to the north of modern Leninakan.

**Eriaini.**—Modern Erivan.

**Kiehuni.**—Between Erivan and Lake Sevan.

**Suini.**—To the East of Lake Sevan.

With the rise to power of the Urartu kings most of the Nairi lands were forced into the Federation. The rulers of Biaina wanted to establish a centralized government and curb the independence of many small kingdoms. They succeeded to a certain extent and their greatness is to be attributed to that fact. That

in itself was a gigantic task, for the mountaineers of Nairi, long used to freedom, could not so easily give up their independence, and they revolted against Urartu rule whenever an opportunity presented itself.

## SOCIAL ORDER AND RELIGION

Even though the Urartuans were so hopelessly divided in their political alignment, their social, religious and cultural life had a more uniform pattern. The people were divided into three classes, viz. the priesthood, the nobility and the plebians. The power of government was vested in the first two classes, while the common people had no voice at all in the administration of the country.

The King was at the top of the social order, described as the servant and the representative of the great God Khaldi. He was the Chief Priest as well as the Commander-in-Chief of the army. He ruled by divine right and he had supreme power over all his subjects. That some of these pre-Armenian kings emulated the insolence and the arrogance of the Assyrian rulers is evidenced by their inscriptions. The following is a fair sample of this distinctly oriental superciliousness: "Sarduris the great, the mighty king, the king of multitudes, king without rival, wonderful keeper of men, who is unafraid of all opposition, the king who subjugates the rebellious, the King of Kings, etc. etc."

The priests constituted a privileged class, who in addition to religious matters had outside activities as judges, teachers and healers. They attended to all

civil and criminal cases. They were the Magi and were selected from noble families with whom priesthood was hereditary. They also were in charge of the oracles. Music and literature, too, were in their domain.

The nobility were the land owners and lived on the labor of the common people. They were the civil administrators as well as the military officers. Each nobleman had his private army commensurate with his rank. In times of war they were bound to offer their armies to the king. These armies were composed of professional soldiers who were attached to their war lord for all times.

The common people were mostly peasants who cultivated the land for the nobles. They lived in the plains and led a precarious life. They were armed, although they were never taken into the army. When the country was invaded they left their occupations and forming into bands fought a guerilla warfare. For this reason perhaps they were called fighters but never soldiers.

The basic principle in the Nairi-Urartuan religion was light and the power of the natural elements. At first each section had its local gods, but later when a political Federation was developed a religious concordat too was effected. Thus the gods of all the sections were brought into an alliance and were commonly worshipped all over the country. And just as the kings of Urartu became the head of the political union, so too Khaldis became the supreme God of the country, each district still retaining its local deities.

The pre-Armenian Pantheon was headed by a triad composed of Khaldis, the great god, the per-

sonification of spiritual and moral light, the giver of cleanliness, the "Mighty Lord" and "Lord of Hosts," Teisras, the god of the atmosphere and the skies, and Artinis, the third member of the triad, who was the Sun God.

Of numerous other deities the principal ones were:

Sieltardis, the Moon God, Was, the God of Air, Atrinis, the God of Storms, Elipris, the God of Dawn, Wias, the God of Rain, and many others. The principal Goddess was Saris, who personified Love and Conception, and was the bride of Khaldis. She corresponds to the Assyrian Astarte and the Babylonian Nana and it is not improbable that she was borrowed from these southern neighbors.

The stars too were worshipped by the Urartuans and were considered by them as interpreters of the gods. Every living creature was supposed to be under the influence of these heavenly bodies. The fate of a person was decided at the time of his birth by the star that was in its ascendancy at the time. The falling of meteors, thunder and other natural phenomena were interpreted in terms of personal and national vicissitudes. Even to the present day Armenian peasants consider the "falling of a star" as a sign of death for the person whom it represents.

#### ASSYRIAN INVASIONS OF NAIRI

With the ascendancy of the Assyrian Empire in Northern Mesopotamia, at the very foot of the Armenian highlands, begins the great struggle between

the two peoples and lasts for almost one thousand years until the fall of Nineveh. The Assyrians were a warlike and fierce tribe of Semitic origin, who having rid themselves of the Babylonian yoke established one of the most vicious and the most tyrannical autocracies mankind has ever seen. The thirst for conquest on the part of their kings was never quenched. Soon they brought under their domination the whole Mesopotamian Plain and began to look toward the west for further conquests. But the mountainous country to their north was like a thorn on their side and a constant menace to their lands when their armies were invading far away countries. So it was a measure of safety on their part to subjugate the northern peoples.

The first invasion of Armenia by the Assyrians was undertaken by Salman-Assar I (cir. 1330-1316 B.C.). He followed the River Tigris to the Plain of Amid (Diarbekir) and thence north into the lands of Nairi. Here it was that the River Subnates, a tributary of the Tigris, had its source and flowing south had created a natural road to the Highlands. And it was on the rocky banks of this stream that the Assyrian monarch had had his exploits inscribed as a memento of his prowess and also as a signpost for future incursions. In this inscription Salman-Assar speaks of the conquest and the complete subjugation of the lands of Nairi. And yet, according to the testimony of later records, this Assyrian king established Semitic colonies on the southern frontier of Nairi to protect his lands against the incursions of the latter.

URARTUAN ENVOYS IN UR OF THE CHALDEES



After Salman-Assar I there was a decline in Assyrian power for two hundred years and no important invasions of the northern lands are recorded until we come to the reign of Teglath-Pal-Assar I, the last representative of the first Assyrian Empire (1108-1080 B.C.). Being one of the greatest conquerors of the East Teglath-Pal-Assar invaded Armenia three times and following the example of his predecessor, Salman-Assar, he too had his exploits carved on the rocks by the Subnates River, in the same boastful style so characteristic of the Assyrian rulers. Here is an excerpt from this historical record:

"My Lord Assur sent me against the lands of far away kings, who recognized no authority, and I went playfully. I made my soldiers go through deep vales, difficult paths and steep slopes, the like of which no king before me had ever seen. I passed through sixteen huge mountains. . . . Twenty-three kings of the lands of Nairi gathering their soldiers and their war chariots advanced against me. With the force of my mighty arms I crushed them. Like the lightning of Ramman I played havoc among their countless troops. I spread the corpses of their warriors upon the mountain sides like sesame. I crushed one hundred twenty of their war chariots. With my spear I drove the sixty kings of the lands of Nairi and those who had come to their aid as far as the Upper Sea (Lake Van).

I conquered their large cities and took the inhabitants and their property with me. I set fire to their cities and destroyed them, and made of them piles of ruins and changed them into barren lands. I seized their horses and mules and countless agricultural imple-

ments. I captured all the kings of the lands of Nairi as prisoners of war. Even though I had them put in chains, I spared their lives and granted them their liberty before my Lord Shamush, after having sworn them to loyal subjugation for the rest of their days. I took their sons as hostages and placing upon them a tribute of 1200 horses and 2000 oxen, I allowed them to return to their countries. I conquered all the vast lands of Nairi and made of all their kings my subjects."

Allowing for the usual exaggeration, this inscription may be interpreted to mean that Teglath-Pal-Assar invaded Nairi three times and finally signed a peace treaty with the kings of the country, keeping the status quo, and exacting only a small yearly tribute and a promise from them not to rise against Assyria.

Due partly to this treaty and to the weakening of the Assyrian Kingdom after the death of Teglath-Pal-Assar, Nairi was not molested for more than two centuries. But with the access of Teglath-Adar II to the throne we see a revival of the old spirit of conquest at Nineveh. Teglath-Adar's reign lasted only five years and during that short period he found time to make an incursion into Nairi, evidently with no serious effect. For it was during the reign of his son and successor, Assur-Nazir-Abal (885-860 B.C.), that Nairi was completely subjugated after four consecutive invasions.

Assur-Nazir-Abal was much more ambitious than his predecessors. When he came to power Assyria had fallen into the position of a second rate power. His

plan was not only to regain all the former possessions of his kingdom and to subjugate all the former subject kings, but he wanted to conquer new lands, those rich and prosperous countries in Asia Minor and Syria. Yet he knew well that before he could undertake such a great enterprise he had to make his flank safe against probable attacks from the northern peoples. So in the second year of his reign he began his first campaign in Armenia and followed it with three others in 884, 880 and 867 B.C. respectively. The outcome of these campaigns was the complete subjugation of the lands of Nairi.

The predecessors of Assur-Nazir-Abal had been content with the imposition of tribute on conquered countries. They never meddled in the internal affairs of the conquered peoples, whose kings remained in power and ruled according to their own traditions. Assur-Nazir-Abal, however, was more far-sighted. He knew that his subject kings would rise against his power at the first opportunity that presented itself to them. So he appointed governors and imposed upon Nairi a new system of taxation. It appeared for a while that the spirit of these independent highlanders was finally broken by the Assyrian tyrannical rule and the supremacy of Semitic civilization over that of the Hittite peoples was accomplished. For Assur-Nazir-Abal had succeeded in carrying his rule to the Mediterranean, having conquered Syria and the seaports of Phoenicia.

While this crushing defeat was threatening the very existence of the lands of Nairi, an invisible force was shaping itself in the country. This force began



to manifest itself in the form of the kingdom of Urartu, hitherto not even mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions. The first mention of this name is found in an inscription of Assur-Nazir-Abal which states that he "conquered the land from the sources of the Subnates to Urarti." And just at the time when Nairi lay prostrate and all the non-Semitic peoples of the Near East were giving up all hope of successful opposition to the tyrannical rule of Assyria, this hitherto unknown country was preparing to furnish the necessary leadership to withstand the seemingly irresistible force of Nineveh.

It was this small country that came upon the historical scene at the beginning of the ninth century B.C. with a great mission to perform. This mission consisted in organizing the northern peoples not only for defensive purposes but for the final decision as to the fate of Western Asia. It was the last phase of the old rivalry between the Hittites of Asia Minor and the Semites of Mesopotamia. And for more than a hundred years Urartu fought the Goliath of the south and several times in that period brought the proud Assyrian kingdom to the very brink of destruction.

Although we know very little about Urartu and its inhabitants prior to their sudden and forceful appearance upon the historical horizon in the first half of the ninth century, it does not seem possible that they did not belong to the same race as the other inhabitants of the lands of Nairi. Whether they had been members of the Nairi Federation or not, their sudden rise to the leading position in the Federation

has remained unexplained. With their appearance, however, we find all the inhabitants of the Armenian Plateau imbued with a new spirit which soon transformed them into a great people, whom even arrogant Assyria began to fear and respect.

### KING ARAME

The man who brought about this miraculous change was the King of Urartu. It was he who transformed the loosely-connected, moribund Nairi Federation into a living and highly efficient organism. It was he, King Arame of Urartu, who inspired the people with the vision of future greatness, and prepared for that greatness with keen foresight. King Arame was a great diplomat as is shown by his skill in maneuvering the unification of the country. He was also a great organizer as he succeeded, in a comparatively short time, to create an efficient fighting machine out of the private armies of numerous subordinate kings. And he proved himself to be a great military leader as he resisted the mighty forces of Assyria for many years, even after sustaining several defeats.

Arame was a contemporary of King Salman-Assar II of Assyria (860-825 B.C.), who invaded Nairi-Urartu four times during his long reign. It was the fate of this king to be on the battlefield most of his life as both the Urartuans and the Hittite peoples of Asia Minor were in continuous rebellion against Assyrian rule. The inscriptions left by Salman-Assar

mention at least twenty-one campaigns in Asia Minor.

The first campaign of Salman-Assar in Armenia took place in 860 B.C., the first year of his reign. After devastating Khubushkia, one of the federated states, he entered into Urartu. This first campaign is recorded by the Assyrian king in the following words:

"... I set fire to the city of Khubushkia and one hundred other cities of the district. ... Coming out of the city of Khubushkia I approached the fortified city of Sugunia which belongs to Arame of Urartu. I attacked the city and captured it. I killed many of his soldiers. I burned fourteen more of his cities. Coming out of Sugunia I marched to the Sea of Nairi and dipped my weapons into it. There I offered sacrifices to my gods and had my image made, upon which I wrote the fame of Assur, my Lord, and my own might."

This inscription, in the opinion of many scholars, plainly shows the failure of Salman-Assar in his campaign against Arame. The king of Urartu, after losing one fortified and fourteen open towns, must have shown a stiff resistance to the invaders to make them turn toward the lake. Allowing for the usual exaggeration of the Assyrians it might even mean that the Urartuan army forced the invaders to return south toward their own territory. At any rate one fact remains clear, that the power and prestige of king Arame was not impaired.

Three years later Salman-Assar returned with a greater army and according to his story he was more successful this time. He captured and destroyed many cities, among which Arzasku, the capital of Arame.

The Assyrian inscription speaks of the flight of king Arame to the mountains in the land of Addur. Salman-Assar returns to Assyria without having subdued the king of Urartu.

Arame resisted a third invasion of his country by Salman-Assar in 844. The Assyrian inscription again proclaims the destruction of the cities of Arame, but there is nothing to show that the king of Urartu was subdued or his power was broken. He remained unconquerable, although he sustained many losses such as the burning of cities and the slaughter of the inhabitants. Nor was the Urartuan army broken or demoralized in these campaigns, for there is no mention of prisoners by Salman-Assar. So the three campaigns failed to attain their objective which was the subjugation of Urartu and the destruction of Arame's forces.

Thus Arame became the founder of a new kingdom which could successfully resist the mighty armies of the servants of Assur. His strategy consisted of fighting isolated battles and of waging guerilla warfare which well suited the terrain of the country and taxed the patience and morale of the invading forces. The inhabitants of the Nairi countries must have been impressed by this display of Arame's ability and consequently they not only accepted his leadership but actually submitted to his political domination over them. For soon we find the confines of Urartu expanding and only a few years after the third invasion by the Assyrians the capital of Urartu is found transferred to the shores of Lake Van.

## SARDURIS I

Henceforth the Kingdom of Urartu is also called the Kingdom of Biaina, which is a variation of the name Van. The transfer of the capital to south is accredited to King Sarduris I who reigned from 835 to 820 B.C. This is the first proto-Armenian ruler who has left us records about his reign in the form of inscriptions written in the Assyrian language. In this inscription, found in the city of Van, Sarduris speaks of himself as "King of Kings, King of multitudes, collector of tribute from many kings" and other arrogant titles which were characteristic of the Assyrian rulers.

Sarduris followed the policy of Arame and completed his program of defense. The transfer of the capital of the kingdom from the north to the shores of Lake Van was both a strategic and a political move. The location he chose was well nigh impregnable. The city was built upon an inaccessible rock protected by high mountain ranges on the east and south and by the lake on the west. Thus the line of defense of the Nairi Lands was brought nearer to the Assyrian border. Politically it meant the further domination of the country by the kings of Urartu and the unification of the people.

So when Salman-Assar undertook his fourth campaign against the lands of Nairi his forces found such resistance as they had never experienced before. They could not even approach the borders of Urartu as the fighting took place on the banks of the Arazani, a tributary of the Euphrates, and the Assyrians ended

the campaign after having "filled the valley with the corpses of his (Sarduris') soldiers."

The failure of the last campaign of Salman-Assar strengthened the position of Sarduris and further enhanced the prestige of Urartu among the northern peoples. Sarduris continued to solidify his power and to bring under his rule and influence other kindred and unruly tribes. From the inscriptions he has left we can see that this king looks upon his state as a world power. Like the Assyrian conquerors of his times Sarduris becomes a contender for world supremacy and the rivalry between the two kingdoms from then on assumes a more acute aspect.

The new policy of world conquest brought a change in the outlook and psychology of the Urartians. Their successful defense against the mighty Assyrians and the triumph of their arms against their haughty neighbors made them conscious of a national superiority. Soon we find them imitating these powerful neighbors in their arrogance and assimilating their culture and patterning their civilization on Assyrian lines. Furthermore a new national consciousness was permeating the conglomerate races. Under the new policy the intellectual elevation of the Nairi peoples was also keeping abreast with their military and political ascendancy.

## ISPUINIS

Sarduris I was succeeded by his son Ispuinis (cir. 820-800 B.C.) who carried on the policy of his father.

Thanks to the new line of defense he easily repulsed the attack of the Assyrians who were not allowed this time to reach the Arazani. All the efforts of Shamsi-Ramman, the son of Salman-Assar, to destroy the power of the ambitious Urartu king were frustrated. Moreover Ispuinis himself invaded Assyrian territory as he left an inscription on a monument erected on a spot to the southeast of Lake Urmia, only a few days' journey from Nineveh.

Ispuinis was also playing a diplomatic game. His march into Assyrian territory was for the purpose of demonstrating to the Iranian tribes in the east the impotence of Nineveh, and thus inciting them to rebellion against Shamsi-Ramman. These moves were forcing the Assyrian king to take the defensive in the East even though he had penetrated into Syria in the West. The political importance of Urartu was thus becoming more and more apparent.

Another great distinction that falls to king Ispuinis is the use of the Urartuan language in the cuneiform inscriptions he has left. His father had his inscriptions written in the Assyrian. Ispuinis uses the same cuneiform characters, borrowed from the Assyrians, but he has them adapted to the language of his own people. This in itself is ample evidence of the great advance the Urartuans were making in intellectual attainments.

The immediate result of this national literary attainment was the unification of the religious rites. This has come down to us in an inscription made jointly by king Ispuinis and his son Menuas upon the rocks of Van. In this religious codification all the

gods of Biaina and the federated states are named and the worship of each is prescribed.

### MENUAS I

Toward the end of his reign Ispuinis governed his kingdom jointly with his son Menuas as evidenced by his later inscriptions. Thus the new king was well prepared for his task and followed the same course as his predecessors. King Menuas I (800-780 B.C.) subjugated more tribes and extended his kingdom still further. He captured the land of Manna which had remained under Assyrian rule for a long time. In the west he entered the Hittite lands and after capturing the city of Puterius (probably Palu) he advanced toward Melite and fought with its king successfully. In the north he advanced toward Carinia and brought under his rule the whole valley of the Arazani River and the tableland of Carine. In the south he dominated the province of Taraun and thus for the first time probably most of the country that later came to be known as Armenia was brought under the rule of one native ruler. Menuas was realizing the Urartu dream.

The work of this king was not confined to conquests only. The fifty inscriptions he has left speak of his constructive undertakings. They tell what palaces, cities and other public works he built in all parts of the country. Especially he enlarged and beautified his Capital which he calls Tuspa. This was the city that Sarduris had founded. But the grandfather of Menuas had only built the citadel, while he made of the city a great metropolis. The aqueduct

he constructed remains to the present day and is an object of wonder. Tradition ascribes this great engineering feat to Queen Semiramis and even today it is called in her name. But the cuneiform inscriptions found on the aqueduct proclaim it the work of Menuas. The inscription states plainly: "Ispuinis' son Menuas, the mighty son of Khaldis, built this aqueduct. Its name is the Aqueduct of Menuas."

### ARGISTIS I

Argistis I (780-755 B.C.) succeeded his father to the throne of Urartu and during his twenty-five years' reign brought his kingdom to the zenith of its power. One circumstance that was in his favor was the decline of the Assyrian Empire at this time. Internal quarrels, caused by the curtailment of the powers of the priesthood, had weakened the Assyrian army to such a point that Nineveh was forced to be on the defensive. Argistis, on the other hand, had inherited not only a prosperous kingdom but had a well organized army. So his first thought was to enlarge his domain at the expense of the kindred races bordering upon his kingdom.

His campaigns in the north brought under his rule the whole valley of the Araxes. He penetrated into the Caucasus and reached the River Kur. In the southwest he invaded the Hittite country of Melite and captured the capital city. This feat opened before him the road to the Mediterranean, which if he had followed he could have easily conquered all the lands

that had belonged to the Assyrian Empire. His thoughts, however, must have been centered upon Assyria itself. No doubt he planned to crush the old rival before he committed himself to the task of world conquest. So he turned his arms against Nineveh and invaded Assyrian territory.

The country of Manna, lying to the southeast of the Kingdom of Urartu, had long been an object of contention between the two Powers. It had remained under Assyrian rule and any move against it was always considered an act of hostility toward the rulers at Nineveh. Argistis defiantly marched into Manna and rid it of Assyrian influence. Then he turned toward south and faced the traditional enemy of his race. Assur-Dan, the Assyrian ruler was defeated and his kingdom was relegated to second place. Urartu had finally realized its ambition of becoming the supreme power in Western Asia.

The inscriptions of King Argistis are carved upon the wall at the entrance of an artificial cave at Van and cover four hundred lines. Unlike his father's his recorded exploits recount mostly military operations. He was too busy conquering new lands to find time to build up the country. To give a picture of his military operations we quote a few lines from this inscription:

"I conquered the land of Seriagis, set fire to the city and destroyed the palace. Having conquered Puti, Bisti and Khusani I transferred their young men and young women elsewhere. I captured the city of Huzi-Nabutini and the whole country of Shirimutri and the country of Babania and transferred the youth of

the city of Machalusi etc. Raiding the lands of the sons of Erias and invading the country of the Abasans I captured Urienus, the royal city and took as captives 19,255 boys, 10,146 soldiers and 23,280 women. I carried away all their cattle, 35,016 oxen and 101,829 sheep."

## SARDURIS II

Sarduris II who reigned from about 755 to 730 B.C. followed in the footsteps of his illustrious father, the great Argistis. His inscriptions too recount his numerous campaigns and enumerate the booty and the prisoners he had taken. Argistis had been especially fortunate in having a weakened Assyria for a rival. Had the internal strife continued in Nineveh Sarduris might have given the mortal blow to the southern rival. But fate would have it otherwise. Out of the civil strife a military coup d'etat had developed and an end put to the rule of the reigning dynasty. The revolution had brought to the Assyrian throne a great military leader who began his reign as Teg-lath-Pal-Assar III in 745 B.C. It was the beginning of the second Assyrian Empire which was destined to become more powerful than the first.

With the coming of Teg-lath-Pal-Assar the dormant power of the Assyrians began to manifest itself once more. Campaigns began to be undertaken with the old zeal and ferocity. But Nineveh was not unaware of the strength of its rival in the north. Teg-lath-Pal-Assar was too clever to risk his and his country's future upon an immediate show-down. He

knew too well that a defeat at this time would put an end to Assyria. So he bided his time and used the interval in strengthening his position and solidifying his possessions.

The opportunity presented itself to the Assyrian king two years after his access to the throne. Teg-lath-Pal-Assar was shrewd enough not to attack Urartu directly. He wanted to choose the battleground to suit his own plans, so he marched northwest and entering the Hittite lands, west of the Euphrates, he besieged the fortress of Arpad. Sarduris was caught in the trap. Immediately gathering his army and taking with him many of his vassal kings, he hastened to give battle to the Assyrians. The battle, which took place at Kummuch, was terrific. The Assyrians were burning to avenge their recent humiliation and wipe out the disgrace of their late defeats at the hands of the hated Urartuans. At the end of the day the forces of Sarduris were broken and the Urartuan king was forced to flee for his life on horseback. The battle of Kummuch cost Sarduris 73,000 men, killed or captured, and much war material.

Even though the defeat was very disastrous for Sarduris, the Assyrian king did not pursue his enemy and for seven years the two rivals did not confront each other on the battlefield. Finally, however, Teg-lath-Pal-Assar marched straight into the enemy territory. The former allies of Sarduris had deserted him after the defeat at Kummuch. The Assyrian army was irresistible. It swept everything before it until it came to Tuspa. The capital city was made inaccessible by additional fortifications which the later

kings had erected. Teglath-Pal-Assar laid siege to the city but finding it to be impregnable, he devastated the outlying country, spreading terror and death to the helpless inhabitants. Many prosperous cities were destroyed and the wealth of the land was carried away to Assyria. Before raising the siege of Van Teglath-Pal-Assar had his statue erected before the gate of the citadel as a reminder of his terrible might.

But the power of Urartu was not completely broken. The invaders had devastated the country, but they had not succeeded in breaking the spirit of the people. Nor was the political machinery of Urartu impaired, as they still had their king and their government. But the decline of Urartu had begun and their descent toward final destruction was well on its way. By some irony of fate, however, Urartu was to witness the passing out of Assyria from the historical scene, before its turn for oblivion came.

### RUSAS I

Rusas I (730-714 B.C.) is the Ursha mentioned in the Assyrian records. Like his father Sarduris he devoted all his energies for the impairment of the ever ascending Assyrian supremacy. But instead of war he thought of the subtler method of diplomacy to attain his aim. When he came to the throne he found his kingdom greatly weakened by the disastrous defeat of his father. The subject kings, as seems to be a custom of those times, revolted against the new ruler. Rusas had first to establish his prestige among his own subjects, before he could turn his attention

to forming alliances against the hated Assyrians. Having accomplished this he sent envoys to many large and small countries not only in the east and southeast but in Asia Minor and even in Syria, and made treaties of alliances with them.

After that Rusas I followed a policy of watchful waiting. The alliance of Hittite peoples, which was mostly of his own engineering, was to wait for the most opportune moment. Probably he overplayed his Fabian tactics. For after the death of Teglath-Pal-Assar III in 727 B.C. and the five year reign of a weak king another military revolution took place in the Assyrian capital. This political upheaval brought another strong man, Sargon (722-705 B.C.), to the throne of Nineveh. As soon as the new king of Assyria was installed he had to rush from one place to another to crush rebellions against his rule. By swift movements he was now in Syria, now in Media, now in Cappadocia, dealing crushing blows to the allies of Rusas. Sargon's most important victory was won in Syria over the southern branch of the Hittite Empire. Carchemish, the capital of this highly civilized and very prosperous country, having fallen before the onslaught of Assyrian arms, the hope of Hittite supremacy was forever lost and Urartu was left like an island in an engulfing Assyrian sea.

Only after Sargon had subdued all the other rebellious countries that he turned to Urartu for a final reckoning. The Assyrian army invaded the kingdom of Rusas in 714 and city after city fell under its irresistible force. Not only numerous prisoners and loot of great value was taken by Sargon, but Rusas,

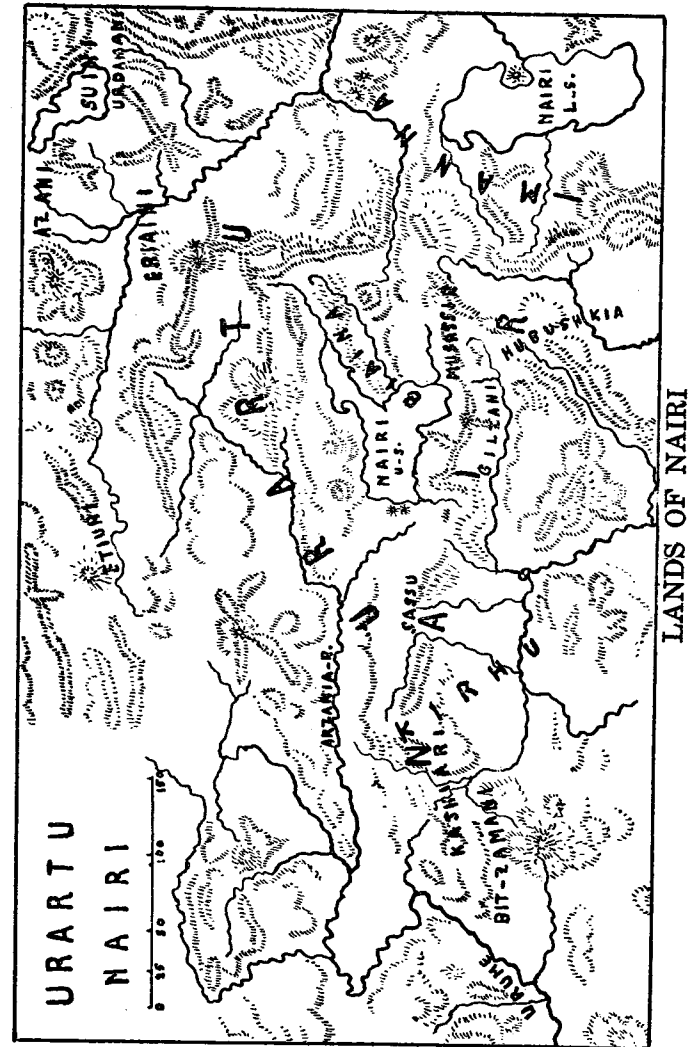
seeing the annihilation of his life's ambition, took his own life.

### THE LAST SEVEN KINGS

With the tragic death of King Rusas I ended the great rivalry of Urartu with its southern neighbor. The country retained its independence for nearly one hundred fifty years longer, but we do not find it fighting against the Assyrians any more. The inscriptions of the kings of Nineveh, mighty successors of Sargon, who carried Assyrian power to its zenith, record no invasions into Urartu. On the contrary an inscription of Assur-Bani-Pal (668-638 B.C.) speaks of King Sarduris III in a friendly tone. "Sarduris," says the Assyrian record, "the King of Urartu, whose royal fathers had declared brotherhood to my father, stated his loyalty to me as a son to his father, saying: 'Greetings to the King, my Lord.' and placed his presents before me."

From the meagre information at hand we gather that seven kings reigned over Urartu after the death of Rusas I to the final overthrow of the kingdom in about 580 B.C. The names and the dates of their reign is as follows:

- ARGISTIS II, 714 to 685 B.C.
- RUSAS II, 685 to 675 B.C.
- ERIMENAS, 675 to 670 B.C.
- RUSAS III, 670 to 645 B.C.
- SARDURIS III, 645 to 620 B.C.
- IRKOUAS, 620 to 600 B.C.
- MENUAS II, 600 to 580 B.C.





Some of these kings have left inscriptions about their constructive activities within the kingdom, but there is hardly any mention of conquests. The people and the rulers seem to have reconciled themselves to their fate. It is very probable that a treaty of friendship was signed by the two former traditional enemies and Urartu was not humiliated by the imposition of a foreign rule. The kings of Urartu were probably required to take an oath of loyalty to Nineveh and brought presents to the Assyrian rulers, but aside from that they were left free to govern their country in their own manner, without interference or dictation.

This tolerance of Urartuan independence on the part of Nineveh is further proved by the incident of the murder of king Sennacherib of Assyria by his two sons and their taking refuge in Urartu, to escape the vengeful wrath of their elder brother, who succeeded the murdered king. Another reason for the peaceful relationship between the old rivals might be considered the new flow of European invasions which was beginning to menace the very existence of all the old civilizations of Western Asia.

### THE URARTU CIVILIZATION

The Nairi-Urartu people had an advanced civilization which attained its zenith under the rule of the Aramian dynasty in what is called the Biaina or Vannic kingdom. Being essentially an agricultural and pastoral people they cultivated these branches to a highly advanced stage. For the development of agriculture a system of irrigation was devised of

which the traces remain to the present day. Their skill in stone-masonry attained a high mark, and their great proficiency in carving is attested not only by their numerous inscriptions of cuneiform writing on hard rocks but specially by their carving out chambers in those rocks. In addition to these they had developed metallurgy, ceramics and the art of making personal ornaments (jewelry).

### STONE-WORKS

The Urartuan buildings bring out the fact that they had learned the secret of using massive stones held in their place by gravity, often without the aid of mortar. The aqueduct of Menuas at Van was built in this Cyclopic style and it has survived the ravages of age to the present day. Traces of Cyclopic architecture have been found in several places in Armenia, in the proximity of cuneiform inscriptions, which brought the discoverers to the conclusion that they must have been Urartuan forts or public buildings of some importance. The art of masonry had reached its perfection, declare these same explorers of antiquity, judging from the architectural fragments left from the Vannic period.

The Urartuans were also highly proficient in mosaics. The figures they made by symmetrical arrangement of small pieces of colored stones are exceedingly fine and aesthetic.

Carving cave-like holes in hard rocks was another occupation in which the stone workers of Urartu were very skillful. There have been found chambers

and whole suites of rooms which were hewn in the hard rock by these artisans. In some instances these chambers were made at a considerable depth, being reached by means of stairways and corridors hewn likewise in the rock. One of these subterranean apartments discovered at Toprak-Kale has fifty-five steps.

Another branch of stone-works was monument making. These were huge pieces of rocks on which the kings of Urartu had their inscriptions carved. The monuments were usually flat, semi-circular at the top, having a smooth surface on which the inscription was hewn in cuneiform characters. The monuments had also huge pedestals with a hole in the centre upon which the stone record was erected.

### IRRIGATION WORKS

Another monument of Urartuan culture that has come down to our times is their waterwork system. We have already seen how the great aqueduct of Menuas is still the main source of water supply for the modern city of Van. A people who could produce such a great engineering work would no doubt have developed a good system of irrigation by building numerous canals. These have long since been covered up but there are still places where the dry canal-beds can be seen. Near Erivan there are two tunnels hewn through the rocks to raise the waters of the River Zangu for the purpose of irrigation. Both these tunnels are in use today and both are considered to have been made by the Urartuans.

In several inscriptions left by Vannic kings there is mention of aqueducts built by several rulers. It is safe to assume from these records that the country was well supplied with a water system both for the purpose of irrigation and for the general use of the population.

### METALLURGY

The Urartuans were not only familiar with gold, silver, copper and iron, but they had made much progress in working on these metals. In the excavation at Toprak-Kale a gold medalion was discovered upon which a very artistic picture is engraved. The picture represents two women, one sitting upon a high-backed chair and the other standing before her with her arms outstretched.

Other artistic works found in Armenia show not only the advancement of the Urartuans in artistic attainment but give us a clear idea about their physical features. For the figures they had made upon gold, silver and copper were taken from life and are important in determining the racial classification of the Urartuans. Judging from these the Urartuan type has been found to have a close similarity to the modern Georgians of the Caucasus.

The carvings upon bronze are real objects of wonder for their fineness and aesthetic conception. Among these is the aegis of Rusas II which is covered with the figures of lions and bulls. A bronze chandelier with three bow-shaped branches is another sign of the great aesthetic progress of the people.

The silversmiths of Urartu were highly skilled in their craft. Their handiwork shows a remarkable aptitude for ornamental art, jewelry and gewgaws. It is curious to note that the modern silversmiths of Van are renowned throughout the world for their highly skillful and artistic work.

As for iron let it suffice to say that the first discovery of this metal is supposed to have been made in Armenia.

### CERAMICS

The art or craft of ceramics, from the baked clay tablets for writing purposes to the huge wine containers, was widely practiced by the proto-Armenians. Urns, vases, and jugs that have been discovered bear upon them artistic drawings. Ornamental figures of various descriptions and pictures of domestic animals, as well as of wild beasts, are found carved upon these earthenware.

At Toprak-Kale some clay tablets have been found which are covered by cuneiform or hieroglyphic writing. As the latter form of writing was used by the Hittites they may be missiles sent to the Vannic kings by neighboring Hittite rulers. The tablets with cuneiform writing are letters or business documents. The tablets of this nature so far discovered are not numerous enough to give a definite picture of the commercial, legal, and social relationship that existed in Urartu. Further discoveries of this nature might shed new light on the social structure and give a more comprehensive picture of the culture of the people.

To give an idea of the wealth and cultural attainment of the Urartuans it would be enough to enumerate the booty that King Sargon of Assyria took away from Musassir, a secondary kingdom of the Urartu Federation.

Here is a partial list of booty taken from the palace of the King Urzana of Musassir:

34 talents and 18 mnas of gold.

167 talents and 27 mnas of silver.

Precious stones.

Batons of ivory and ebony with golden scabbards.

Royal insignia.

Various vessels.

Weapons made of precious materials.

13 bronze basins.

130 bronze objects.

A partial list of booty taken from the temple of Khaldis at Musassir:

6 large golden shields weighing up to 5 talents each.

12 silver shields, golden locks, golden keys, golden swords.

96 golden spears.

33 silver chariots.

394 silver vessels.

25,212 bronze shields.

1514 bronze spears.

305,412 bronze swords.

607 bronze basins for bathing.

4 bronze statues of patron gods, etc., etc.

## CHAPTER III

### FOREIGN DOMINATION

Persian Domination.—Eruandian Kings.—The First Satrapy.—Submission to Alexander the Great.—Seleucid Rule over Armenia.

The arrogant and cruel kingdom of Assyria was finally overthrown in the last decade of the seventh century B.C. by a new power which had not yet made itself known to the world. While the kingdom of Urartu was tottering before the savage onslaught of European invaders, Cyaxares, the king of Media, marched against the Assyrians and after several encounters with them arrived at the gates of Nineveh and laid siege to the proud capital. Media, like all other countries of the Near East of the ancient times had been ravaged by the Assyrians. The decline of the Urartuan power and the inevitable exhaustion of Assyria by its constant wars against every country in the Near East presented an opportunity to the Median king to accomplish what had been the consuming ambition of the Aramian dynasty.

Media was at the extreme northwest of the Iranian Plateau and to the south and southeast of Armenia. The inhabitants were of Aryan race and the country remained under the domination of Assyria for a long time. With this great exploit of Cyaxares, Media became the strongest country in Western Asia and its domination was speedily extended over other war-weary races living in the neighboring ter-

ritories. Among these were the inhabitants of Armenia who probably preferred the rule of a strong neighboring power to the reign of terror the European savages were spreading all over Asia Minor. But the meteoric rise of this first Median empire was shortlived, and about seventy years after the capture of Nineveh it passed under the domination of the Persians. It was Cyrus I (536-529 B.C.), a Persian prince and a nephew of the Median ruler who inherited the young empire and founded the Achaemenian dynasty. Having enlarged his small kingdom by the absorption of Media, Cyrus made further conquests among neighboring countries. He did not, however, deprive the conquered countries of their independence. He exacted a tribute from the vanquished kings and let them rule their lands after having made treaties with them by which they were bound to help the Persians by raising armies and taking part in the wars the Achaemenian king waged against other countries.

So we find kings in Armenia during the first part of Persian domination. The first Armenian king that we know of at this period is Eruand. He was a contemporary of Cyaxares II the uncle of Cyrus. His treaty with the Median king stipulated that he should pay a yearly tribute of fifty talents in raw silver (about \$50,000); that he should erect no forts and he should help Media with an army. The treaty with the Medians was in fact an alliance both for offensive and defensive purposes. In addition to these conditions Eruand had sent his son Tigranes to the Median court as a hostage. Here the Armenian crown prince lived a life becoming his position, received his edu-

cation and served in the Median army. Moreover he formed an intimate friendship with prince Cyrus and took part in the campaigns of the Persian Crown Prince. In one of these campaigns, which was against Croesus, the wealthy king of Lydia, Tigranes had an Armenian army composed of 20,000 infantry and 4,000 cavalry. The Armenian army also took part in the destruction of Babylon which took place in the year 539 B.C.

As a reward for his loyal services Tigranes was allowed to return to his native country and was crowned king after the death of his father. Nothing further do we know about his reign except that the Greek historian, Xenophon refers to him as a wise king and a friend and ally of Cyrus.

A palace revolution in the Persian capital placed Darius Hystaspes on the throne. He too was an Achaemenian and became one of the most renowned representatives of that dynasty. Being a great organizer and administrator he brought about revolutionary changes in the political organization of his empire. Up to his time a conquered country was allowed to retain its king and its government by paying a tribute to the conqueror, but Darius seeing the vital defects of this plan instituted in its place the system of governing through satraps. The conquered lands were divided into territorial units, called satrapies, and placed under the rule of a governor (satrap) appointed by the Persian king. The satraps were usually Persian generals, or members of the royal family. It was customary, also to appoint non-Persians to this high political post, men who had proven their

ability as well as their loyalty to the King of Kings. Another advantage of the new system from the point of view of the Persians was the constant watch the satraps kept upon the movements of the subject peoples. For it was not unusual in those times for vassal kings to take advantage of the difficulties of the ruling nation and revolt against them at a very critical moment. A satrap, however, with the troops at his disposal could easily suppress a revolutionary movement before it would grow into a wide-spread rebellion.

#### PERSIAN SATRAPY

The Armenians and other unruly races of the north strongly resented this new system of government and revolted against the rule of Darius. King Vahagn of Armenia, the son of Tigranes I led the Armenian army and fought valiantly against the Persians, who were under the command of an Armenian general, by name of Datarses. There were three encounters between the two enemy forces which resulted in the routing of the invaders from Armenian soil within thirty days. Encouraged by this success Vahagn marched into Mesopotamia which was under Persian domination. Darius recalled his Armenian general and sent another army against Vahagn, commanded by a Persian. The two armies met in northern Mesopotamia and the Armenians, being defeated, retreated into their own territory. The enemy forces invaded Armenia once more and a

decisive battle was fought at Antigara where the Armenians suffered a disastrous defeat, as a result of which the country was occupied by the Persians and was made into a Satrapy under the name of Armina in 518 B.C.

The bravery of King Vahagn to save the independence of his country must have left an enduring impression upon the minds of his people, for he was immortalized by songs and ballads as a "strong" and "brave" man, a "fighter against dragons," and eventually worshipped as a deity of high rank.

The first designation of the country as Armenia or Armina is thus ascribed to Darius Hystaspes, who has left a record of the events during his reign in an extensive inscription upon a huge rock at Behistun, Persia, written in three languages — Assyrian, Elamese, and Persian. It is in the Persian version that the inscription uses the name Armina for the word Urartu of the Assyrian script.

The Persian rule due to the far sighted policy of Darius and his successors was mild and friendly. The Armenians were required to pay a tribute, commensurate with their wealth, to serve in the Persian armies and to obey the satraps. In return Persia gave them security against foreign invasions, autonomy on lines of their own social system, and respect for their manners and customs. The Persians also did not allow any fighting between their subject countries, so the Armenians were not permitted to fight among themselves or with their neighbors, the result being that they began to prosper under the benevolent rule of the new sovereign.

Yet there were tribes in Armenia who remained independent and never submitted to the foreign yoke. In the province of Cordyene the natives remained unconquered and fought against every effort of invasion under their freedom loving prince. Xenophon admits the fact that the Corduans were a warlike race and independent of Persian rule. We further learn from this Athenian historian how the Corduans destroyed a whole Persian Army of 120,000 men by hurling rocks on them from the inaccessible fastnesses of their mountains.

The Armenians remained under Persian rule for nearly two centuries. They fought bravely in all the wars that the Persian kings undertook. They are mentioned in the works of Greek historians as an army of Armens, "equipped with the weapons of the Phrygians," fighting as a separate unit on the side of the Persians.

The Persian domination brought a great change upon the Armenians. The heterogeneous races began to be molded into a uniform people. Their religion, their customs, their outlook on life were influenced by their contact with the Persians as well as with the outside world. Both the Persian language and customs made a peaceful penetration into Armenia. Xenophon tells how he spoke even with peasant women through Persian interpreters. The Armenian nobility, especially, adopted many of the Persian manners and educated their children in the Iranian style. This influence was to have far reaching consequences in the subsequent history of the country.

New forces, of which the Armenians were not

aware, were to put a stop to this peaceful process of Iranization of the country and the people and bring forth new influences to bear upon them. For in the middle of the fourth century before Christ a new and youthful nation was being forged in Macedonia under the leadership of a hitherto unknown king called Philip of Macedon. The Macedonians were classed among the barbarians by the highly civilized Greeks, although they were their neighbors and a kindred race. King Philip, however, appreciating the value of Hellenic culture, had brought to his court the most famous Greek teacher as a tutor for his son and the heir apparent to his throne. Alexander of Macedonia must have acquired very little from his famous tutor, Aristotle, the great Philosopher, but he became a great soldier and one of the mightiest conquerors of the world. But if king Alexander did not himself imbue the Hellenic culture, he at least was instrumental in carrying that culture into Asia through his legions which included many Greeks in their ranks.

#### ALEXANDER THE GREAT

In the year 334 Alexander crossed the Bosphorus with a small army of 30,000 infantry and 4,000 horsemen and set upon one of the most unique expeditions in the history of mankind. The Persians had extended their rule to the Ionian sea and the Bosphorus and the young warrior made his first contact with the army of the King of Kings near the historic Troy. The army of the satraps of Asia Minor was shattered and with one blow Alexander became the master of these rich Persian provinces.



ARTAXIAS I, THE FOUNDER OF ARMENIAN  
INDEPENDENCE

(This figure in relief was found upon a precious stone)

But Alexander's thirst for power was insatiable. Instead of consolidating his newly acquired vast territories he pushed further on and the following year he met the armies of king Darius Codomannus near Isus in Cilicia and inflicted a severe defeat on the proud Persian ruler. Having conquered Cilicia and Syria and thus made his flanks secure against any unforeseen attack, the Macedonian empire-builder advanced into the very heart of his enemy's territory for a final blow.

The decisive battle between Alexander and Darius, each representing a continent, took place in the town of Arbela, near the ruins of the once proud and resplendent Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Darius, realizing that a defeat meant the overthrow of his rule and the complete annihilation of his empire, had brought all his available forces to the battleground together with his elephants, war chariots and the flower of his infantry and cavalry. The Armenian contingent was composed of 40,000 foot and 7,000 mounted warriors which constituted the whole fighting force of the country. The Macedonian army, on the other hand, was hardly one twentieth of the mighty hosts of the oriental potentate. Yet they were well disciplined, intelligent, fully versed in the art of war and very fortunate in having capable commanders. Here Europe was meeting Asia and it was a question of intellect and technique against mere numerical superiority. The former carried the day and Europe gained the supremacy over Asia. The Persian empire having been destroyed, Armenia too



passed under the domination of the Macedonians and became a province of the new Empire in 331 B.C.

King Alexander never set foot in Armenia. As a part of the Persian empire Armenia automatically passed under the rule of the Macedonians. The Persian system of government remained unchanged, with the only difference that the satrap was now appointed by the king of Macedon.

After the death of Alexander, his empire was divided between his four generals, and Armenia, together with Persia and Syria, fell to Seleucius as his share of the heritage left by the Macedonian conqueror. Establishing the capital of his kingdom at Antioch in northern Syria, Seleucius ruled Armenia through governors, who on account of their cruelty became hateful to the Armenians. Finally they revolted and drove the governor out of the country under the leadership of an Armenian prince by name of Arduard, whom they placed in the governor's chair.

Arduard proved himself to be an astute diplomat as he had been a good leader of the rebellion, and succeeded in making the country semi-independent by taking advantage of the confusion created by the civil wars among the thirty-four generals of Alexander.

In northwestern Armenia another independent principality was established under an Armenian prince called Arsham. Eventually this principality became the kingdom of Sophene when its ruling prince Zareh revolted against the Seleucids in 190 B.C. and proclaimed the independence of his country. This was after the defeat of Antiochus the Great by the Romans

at Magnesia in Lydia. At the same time Artaxias or Artashes, the Armenian governor of Greater Armenia and one of the best generals of Antiochus, proclaimed himself king of the Armenians. Thus in the same year two independent Armenian kingdoms were established after a long period of foreign domination.

## CHAPTER IV

### ARTAXIAS I

Revolt Against Antiochus.—Artaxias Proclaims Independence.—  
The Kingdom of Sophene.—Campaigns of Artaxias.—A Royal  
Romance.—Benefits of Artaxias' Reign.

The Hellenic influence that penetrated into Armenia through the Macedonian and Seleucid domination had its beneficial effects. Especially the nobility soon began to imbue the new culture which was suitable to their nature. Many princely houses adopted the Greek culture as well as the language, and educated their children in Greek philosophy.

One of these princes, Artaxias (Artashes), was a recognized Hellenophile. He had succeeded in gaining the confidence of the great Seleucid King Antiochus IV, who had appointed him as viceroy for his native province, the Plain of Ararat. Artashes was a very able soldier and one of the best generals of Antiochus. The Armenian prince was also a far sighted and wise statesman and he could see that the days of the Seleucid rule over Armenia were counted. He was only waiting for the right moment to proclaim the independence of his country and establish himself as a sovereign king.

As a far sighted statesman, Artaxias or Artashes could not fail to see the decadence of the Seleucids, as well as the might of a new European power which had already set foot on the soil of Asia and was

gradually but surely gaining a strong foothold upon the Near East. This new power was none other than the far western Republic of Rome.

The inevitable did happen in 190 B.C. when Scipio, the commander of the dauntless Roman legions in Asia Minor, fought a decisive battle with Antiochus at Magnesia. The Seleucid ruler was defeated and sued for peace which he obtained by ceding his territories in Asia Minor, as far south as the Taurus mountains, to the Romans. Artashes was one of the Near Eastern princes who had sided with the Romans and fought on their side at Magnesia. After the defeat of Antiochus, Artashes proclaimed the independence of his country and assumed the title of king. The Roman Senate, as a gesture of gratitude for the Armenian assistance, recognized the new kingdom promptly.

The first concern of Artaxias was the expansion of the frontiers of his small kingdom, so he organized his army and began to invade and annex the neighboring lands, mostly inhabited by Armenians. In a short time he brought under his rule the provinces of Paidacaran, Vaspuracan, and Siunik in the east, which had been under the domination of Median kings. From the Georgians he took the Gugark and Taik provinces; in the west he went as far as Carinia and Derjan; while in the south he extended his domain as far as the Anti-Taurus range. This quick triumph of Artashes was partly due to the fact that the inhabitants of these provinces were Armenians who had fallen under the rule of foreign princes and kings. Another cause of his successes is ascribed to Hannibal,

the famous Carthagenian general who had taken refuge in the court of Artashes, after his escape from the palace of Antiochus. This great soldier, who had once terrified Rome, was the military adviser of the Armenian king. Even the choice of a site for a capital for the growing young kingdom is attributed to Hannibal, who had discovered a strategic point on the Araxes river. The Carthagenian refugee supervised the erection of the city which was situated on the left bank of the river, surrounded by the water of the stream on three sides and fortified by a pit and a great wall on the fourth side. The city was named Artaxata (Artashat) in honor of the Armenian king and became a beautiful and well fortified metropolis.

The Seleucids did not forget the treachery of Artaxias, and Antiochus IV attacking with a large army and defeating the Armenians avenged himself upon his former general. But the defeat, evidently, did not have serious consequences upon the Armenians, for soon after we again find Artaxias busy in his ambitious plan of expanding his kingdom. He saw an opportunity to annex the Kingdom of Sophene by taking advantage of the civil war that was going on in this neighboring Armenian State. It was one of those family quarrels when two brothers fight for the throne of their father. Artashes took the part of one brother and invaded Sophene and put his protege upon the throne. The thwarted brother escaped to the court of the neighboring king Ariarath of Cappadocia and asked his aid to restore him to his throne. The Cappadocian monarch, sensing the disadvantages of having a strong Armenia as a neighbor, brought the

deposed king to Sophene and re-established him upon his throne. When Artaxias heard of this he sent envoys to Ariarath with the ignoble proposition of killing the king of Sophene and dividing his country between themselves. The king of Cappadocia, however, refused to comply with this base proposition.

Another venture of Artashes was his alliance with Timarchus, the governor of Media, who likewise had rebelled against Seleucid rule and proclaimed himself king of Media. The two marched against their former rulers and invaded their possessions. But Timarchus being killed in a battle, Media again fell under the Seleucid domination.

#### A ROYAL ROMANCE

An encounter with the Alans of the Caucasus, a tribe of brave mountaineers, discloses a romance of the ambitious Armenian king. These people had come down from their highlands and crossing the river Kura had attacked the Armenian provinces in the north. Artashes went north with his army and had no difficulty in hurling the invaders across the Kura. During the fighting the son of the Alan king having been made a prisoner, negotiations for his release began. The northern chieftain expressed his willingness to sign a treaty of perpetual friendship if the royal scion were set free. The Armenian king, however, refused. Then the story, perpetuated by Armenian folk lore, tells how the daughter of the highland king, the beautiful Sathenik, came to the opposite bank of the river and standing upon a mound said to

Artashes through an interpreter: "To you I appeal, O brave Artashes, you who defeated the intrepid and noble Alans, listen to the plea of the Alan maid with beautiful eyes, and release the young man!" The king was struck by the audacity and the beauty of the princess and wanted to marry her. So he sent his emissaries to the king, her father, with many valuable gifts. Finally a treaty was signed and Artaxias returned to his capital with his new bride. The marriage of Artashes and Sathenik has been immortalized in a song which was sung by the famous Goghtan singers of the time, and partly preserved to the present day.

After his marriage Artaxias became a different man. Jealousy, family quarrels among his numerous offsprings, and suspicion of his trusted lieutenants made his life miserable. To this must be added the unfaithfulness of his young queen, which made the old king unhappy and quarrelsome. After all we must not forget that he was at heart an Asiatic prince, proud, haughty, tyrannical and vainglorious.

With all his faults this first Armenian sovereign made a good ruler. For he was not only a great fighter but a good organizer, a shrewd diplomat, a wise administrator and a great builder. His consuming thought was to create a great kingdom with a homogeneous population. With this end in view he absorbed all the Armenian semi-independent tribes and small kingdoms and set for himself the Herculean task of welding them into one united people, with one language and a common civilization. The fact that he did not differentiate between the means he used to attain his ends must not be held against him. For in

the age he lived many viler crimes were perpetrated and kings, especially, were considered privileged to resort to ignoble deeds.

Not only did Artaxias enlarge his kingdom but he brought prosperity to his subjects. Especially the commerce of Armenia took great strides under his wise leadership and the country became one of the richest and most influential lands of the Near East. According to legends preserved for posterity "During the reign of Artashes there was not a strip of land left uncultivated, there was no man left unemployed."

#### HELLENIC INFLUENCE

Born and brought up in a world of Hellenic culture king Artaxias bent his efforts throughout his life to Hellenize his country. He introduced many reforms into his kingdom, reorganized the army, created new military ranks, and established law and order. With his calendar reforms and other innovations he created such an abundant life for the country as the inhabitants of Armenia had not known for centuries. During his reign the people experienced one of those rare moments of rebirth that makes a nation strong and determined to climb to greater heights. His reign stands as a golden age, during which he not only gave political independence and economic prosperity to his people, but also inspired them to cultural advancement and intellectual endeavors. The arts and sciences prospered under him and the Armenian people began to feel proud of themselves.

That he was loved greatly by his subjects is

attested by the fragments of songs the poets of his day made about him both during and after his reign. One of these was about his wooing and marriage with the Albanian princess. Another fragment represents him wishing at his death-bed for the return of his youthful days:

"O! would that I might see the smoke of the chimneys,  
And the bright morning of the New Year's day;  
The running of the oxen and the coursing of the deer!"

The death of the beloved king was mourned by the entire population. Many of his followers and intimates committed suicide upon his grave as a sign of their devotion to him.

From the death of Artaxias to the accession of Tigranes the Great, a period of fifty years, there is a confusion in the record of events in Armenia. Artaxias was succeeded by his son Artavazd I. Probably he was the king whose name has been preserved in the Armenian legends as chained by evil spirits in a pit on Mount Massis (Ararat). "Since you departed and took with you the whole country (people), how can I rule over ruins?" Thus Artavazd is supposed to have complained at the sight of many suicides upon the grave of his father. To which the spirit of the departed king answers with the following curse:

"When you ride up the Massis for hunting, spirits shall take hold of you and carry you into the mountains. There you shall remain and never again see the light of day."

According to the legend the curse of Artashes worked, and Artavazd is still a prisoner, chained in a pit on Mount Ararat. Two dogs are constantly gnawing his chains to set him free, but the shackles are strengthened every time the blacksmiths strike upon their anvils.

## CHAPTER V

## TIGRANES AND HIS EMPIRE

Release of Tigranes as Hostage.—His Plan of Action.—Alliance with Mithradates.—The Defeat of Parthia.—“The King of Kings.”—Syria and Cilicia Submit to Tigranes.—The Occupation of Phoenicia.—The Zenith of Tigranes’ Power.—Friction with Rome.—Lucullus Attacks Armenia.—The Fall of Tigranocerta.—The Treason of the Crown Prince.—Pompey Comes East.—The Treaty of Arataxata.

Armenia had fallen under Parthian influence before the end of the second century B.C. The successors of Artaxias, although still keeping their thrones, had been reduced to vassal kings by the rising power of Parthia, an eastern Iranian country. One of these kings, possibly a grandson of Artaxias, had to send his son as a hostage to the Parthian court. When he died the son had to bribe the Parthians to allow his return to Armenia. The bribe consisted of a territorial cession of seventy fertile valleys to the Parthian king.

The erstwhile hostage was crowned king of Armenia under the name of Tigranes (Dikran) II and reigned over the country from 95 to 56 B.C. He was already a mature man, being about forty-five years old, at the time of his accession to the throne. Not only had he received a good Hellenic education in his youth, but having lived among the Parthians in his mature years he had learned much of their oriental cunning, as well as of their military art. No

doubt his autocratic manners, his arrogance and his love for flattery were likewise acquired by him in the court of the Iranian king. He considered himself a representative of the gods and an executor of their wills, responsible only to them and to no human being.

This idea of divine right became an obsession with Tigranes and was directly responsible for his superhuman efforts to conquer many countries. It further whetted his appetite for power and his yearning for flattery. He became an autocrat *par excellence*, disdainful and vainglorious. He wanted to become the supreme lord of Asia, distributing kingdoms as gifts, having monarchs for servants, and forcing everybody to bow to his will. As a manifestation of his dreams he wanted to build a city which would become the Capital of Capitals of the world. He would make it the center of all Greek culture by bringing there not only the cultural works of the Hellenes, but also peoples from all over the Hellenic world, uprooted by force from their homes and transplanted to the new metropolis.

When Tigranes finally attained the throne of his fathers he found a weak and disorganized country. Internal quarrels between various nobles and chieftains had brought the country to the brink of disintegration. The lack of a strong central authority had made the local rulers of various sections disdainful toward the royal house. The external enemies, on the other hand, were encroaching upon the country and trying to grab for themselves choice portions from Armenia. Of this Tigranes had had a foretaste even before his return, as he had been forced to cede

seventy rich valleys to the Parthians in order to obtain his own release.

It was under such unfavorable circumstances that Tigranes II came to power. For thirty years he fought continuously, invading foreign countries, deposing kings, breaking up empires, and all the time adding new territories to his kingdom. For a while it seemed that he would succeed in realizing his great dream of establishing a world empire and bringing all the peoples of Western Asia under his iron rule. But fate would have it otherwise. And fate intervened in the form of a European power which, having already conquered most of Europe and northern Africa, was penetrating into Asia. The Roman Republic, young, energetic and ambitious, could not for long remain an indifferent observer of the efforts of Tigranes to create a powerful state. As long as the Armenian king remained in the hinterland he was tolerated. But when his ambition and his dynamic energy drove him to the shores of the Mediterranean, the Romans became irritated, for they already considered that land-locked sea as a Roman lake.

#### MITHRADATES

Tigranes must have planned his line of action in advance. His first concern was to unite all the Armenians under his rule and impose upon them a very strongly centralized government. So he began his reign with a radical reorganization not only of the army but of the government as well. As soon as his army was made into an effective fighting machine, he put it to a test by invading the sister Armenian

kingdom of Sophene. Victory was instantaneous, and Sophene was annexed to the mother country. While consolidating his gains and further perfecting his fighting mechanism, Tigranes made an alliance with Mithradates, king of Pontus, which was located upon the southern shore of the Euxine Sea and to the northeast of Armenia. The alliance was cemented by the marriage of the Armenian king to beautiful Cleopatra, the young daughter of Mithradates.

Some historians believe that this alliance was the cause of the final undoing of Tigranes, as Mithradates had already won for himself the enduring enmity of Rome and was marked for utter annihilation by the Roman leaders. Anybody who allied himself with this arch foe of the western Republic would eventually share in the fate reserved for the king of Pontus. Tigranes, moreover, seems to have benefited much less than his father-in-law from the bargain.

One distinct advantage the alliance gave to Tigranes was the understanding about the field of operations in which the two allies were to work. The Armenians were not to come into direct contact with the Romans. Tigranes was to extend his Empire in a zone which was as yet outside the sphere of Roman influence. Any territorial gains in Asia Minor was to go to Mithradates, while Tigranes was given a free hand in the east and south, as well as in Syria and Cilicia. At the beginning it seemed the Armenians had the best of the bargain as there was no power strong enough to resist them in this zone, while their flank was protected by the engagement of the Romans by the Pontic forces.

For a long time the plan worked successfully and very favorably for the Armenians. The first test of the alliance came when Mithradates asked his son-in-law to invade the kingdom of Cappadocia whose ruler had been friendly with the Romans. The Armenian army did its job admirably and after routing the king and looting the country it turned over the occupied territories to Mithradates in accordance with the terms of the Alliance. The Cappadocian king, however, returned and recovered his kingdom with the aid of Roman legions. Then a second campaign in Cappadocia by the Armenian forces once more gave the country to Pontus, but Mithradates again failed to keep Cappadocia against Roman intervention.

#### TIGRANES "KING OF KINGS"

The campaigns in Cappadocia served as a school for the soldiers of Tigranes. His reorganized army was to be tested in actual warfare and the two campaigns in the west presented the opportunity to season the new army. It was after the test had proved successful that Tigranes started his wars of conquest. The first of these wars was undertaken against Parthia, the strongest power of western Asia. Besides, Tigranes had a personal score to settle with this powerful country, which had humiliated his pride by forcing him to give up to her seventy valleys from his own kingdom, as a price for his release. The disgrace of this shameful transaction had to be wiped out before the proud king of Armenia could regain his self-respect and launch upon his more ambitious plans





TIGRANES THE GREAT

(Picture taken from a coin which the Armenian king issued in Antioch as a memento of his domination of Syria.)

of conquest. The opportunity presented itself in the year 88, two years after the last Cappadocian campaign, when Artavan II had ascended the throne of Parthia. Following the custom of these times to attack a new king before he had time to prove his valor, Tigranes, with the pretext of reclaiming his lost valleys, invaded Parthian territory. He was not, however, satisfied with the recovery of his own lands but pushed farther and farther into the possessions of Parthia. He annexed to his kingdom the provinces of Cordyene, Atrapatene and northern Mesopotamia, with the fortified city of Nisibin. After further conquests of rich southern provinces, Tigranes penetrated into Media and captured the fortified city of Atrapana which was one of the residences of the kings of Parthia. Tigranes made much of the capture of this fortress and to commemorate his exploits he ordered new coins minted upon which he had inscribed the words "**Tigranes King of Kings.**"

This coveted title had belonged to the Parthian kings but Tigranes considered it his right to assume it after he had defeated the King of Kings. It was a shrewd and highly effective move on his part and it succeeded in enhancing his prestige before the peoples of Asia who always respected and bowed before power. The Parthians accepted defeat and were forced to make a treaty of alliance with Tigranes. After the submission of the Parthians other neighboring states in north and east were forced to recognize the supremacy of the new King of Kings. Thus the kings of Albania and Iberia in the Caucasus became vassals

of Tigranes, as the rulers of Media and Cordyene had become his obedient servants.

### THE CONQUEST OF SYRIA AND CILICIA

Having completed his work in the east and north Tigranes turned his eyes toward southwest. Here the once powerful and vast empire of the Seleucids was still extant, although in a feeble and decadent internal quarrels, by the incompetence of its rulers and by the petty jealousies and insubordination of the nobility. Antiochus Eusebius, the ruling monarch, had become hateful to his subjects and a strong nationalistic party was formed which sought the salvation of the country in the rule of a strong foreign king. Tigranes of Armenia, the most powerful of Asiatic kings, was approached by the Syrian nationalists and offered the throne of their country. In the year 83 Tigranes took his army and marched upon the Seleucid kingdom. The resisting cities fell one after the other and Tigranes captured Antioch, the capital of Syria, and there he had the crown of the Seleucids placed upon his head.

The Seleucid kingdom extended from the right bank of the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea, from the Gulf of Alexandretta to the maritime cities of Phoenicia. The King of Kings pacified the country in a short time and gave the population of Syria peace and prosperity, the like of which they had not experienced for a long time. Antioch, one of the most renowned cities of the world, became the western capital of the Armenian Empire.

The conquest of Syria was followed by the subjugation of Cilicia, a possession of the Seleucids to the north. Evidently Tigranes considered the acquisition of this territory as his last frontier in this sector, for after the conquest of the country he destroyed the prosperous city of Soli and transplanted all its inhabitants to his newly built city of Tigranocerta. Cilicia was joined to the satrapy of Syria and governed by Bagarat, one of the generals of Tigranes, from the city of Antioch.

A third expedition into Cappadocia, at the request of Mithradates, gave Tigranes another great opportunity to populate Tigranocerta with Greek captives. It is stated that during this campaign about 300,000 Cappadocians were deported from their towns and settled in the new capital. These uprooted Greeks were to take their vengeance later by betraying the great city to the Romans.

The rich maritime cities on the Syrian coast, which had for centuries become the center of international trade, could not escape the covetous attention of the great Armenian conqueror. So in the year 72 B.C., on the pretext of pursuing Queen Selene, who had taken refuge in the fortified town of Ptolomais, Tigranes marched his army south from Antioch into the Phoenician lands. The famous seaports of Tyre and Sidon fell under the onslaught of the King of Kings, and Berytus and Damascus with its fertile and rich lands became Armenian territories. Queen Selene was captured and later put to death.

The Jewish kingdom of Jerusalem was spared the Armenian invasion solely through the wise move of Alexandra, the reigning queen, who upon hearing of

the presence of Tigranes in the neighboring country, sent her envoys to him with precious gifts and begged him to be lenient with her people. This friendly move on the part of the Jewish queen was paramount to submission to the influence of the new world-power of Armenia and Tigranes accepted the friendly offerings and left the Jews in peace.

### TIGRANES AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS CAREER

With the capture of Phoenicia Tigranes gained the zenith of his power. He was now undoubtedly the most powerful ruler in the East. In spite of his Greek education, however, he was at heart an oriental potentate: vainglorious, autocratic, ostentatious and wilful. Having taken the title of "King of Kings" he tried to live up to the tradition connected with that title. His court became a sumptuous hub where oriental splendor and occidental culture rubbed elbows. Kings and nobles, satraps and generals in their dazzling uniforms vied with each other for the favor of the mighty ruler.

As the old capital Artaxata was too far north to serve as the central seat of the imperial government, Tigranes built the city of Tigranocerta, the exact location of which is unknown to us. There is no doubt that it was in the southern part of the country, near the Mesopotamian border. This city, when completed, was to be the most sumptuous metropolis of the world. It was to be also the cultural centre of mankind, radiating the Hellenic erudition to all the Mediterrānean lands. It was for this purpose that

Tigranes had uprooted entire populations of Greek cities in Cilicia and Cappadocia and brought them to his capital. Nor was it only the Greeks that the emperor forced to live in the new city. He ordered the Armenian nobility to build pretentious mansions and palaces for themselves in Tigranocerta to add to the splendor of his capital.

The plan of the city was very pretentious. It was surrounded with walls over one hundred feet in height and so wide that large stables and spacious barracks were built within them. The vast imperial palace, the imposing imperial theatre and other public buildings made the place look like a dream city. The suburbs contained the residences of the nobility—magnificent palaces and imposing mansions, surrounded by beautiful and spacious gardens.

Being proud, almost haughty and superb in bearing, Tigranes lived the part of the great conqueror to perfection. As King of Kings he took away and gave crowns at his volition. He ruled over a vast empire composed of polyglot races—Arabs, Greeks, Persians, Medes, Iberians, Syrians—who bowed to his will. Dethroned kings waited upon him at table. When he received foreign envoys his vassal kings stood beside his throne with their hands crossed upon their chests. Four kings ran before his chariot when he came out for a ride. He thought himself to be invincible.

### FRICTION WITH ROME

Up to this point Tigranes had been very cautious in avoiding any direct friction with the Romans, even

though he had entered into an alliance with Mithradates, the arch foe of Rome. He preferred to fight the Parthians and the Seleucids rather than face the Roman generals. That is why perhaps when his famous father-in-law came to him for refuge, after one of his defeats by the Romans, Tigranes gave him a cold reception, and placed under his disposition a distant castle which served him almost like a prison.

But when Lucullus, the Roman general in command of the Asia Minor legions, hearing of the escape of Mithradates into Armenia, sent an envoy to Tigranes at Antioch and demanded that he deliver to the Romans the famous refugee, the King of Kings lost his temper and gave the Roman envoy such a haughty answer that Lucullus construed it as a declaration of war.

The Roman general at once passed into action. Gathering his well-seasoned and disciplined legions he marched to the Euphrates River, intending to strike his blows at the Armenians before they had time to prepare for an attack. Tigranes hurried back from Antioch to Tigranocerta, where he called Mithradates, and patching up the differences between them, sent him to Pontus with an army. Meanwhile the approach of the Roman legions to the Armenian border did not disturb Tigranes. His belief in his invincibility and his misconceived estimation of the Roman fighters gave him a false feeling of security, which was to cost him his great city.

The advance of the Roman legions was so swift that Tigranes had the first messenger, who brought the news of their entry into Armenian soil, beheaded.

To the King of Kings, used to flattery and sycophancy, this seemed in the nature of a lie. One of his generals, however, made Tigranes realize the truth and he was at once dispatched with a small army to impede the advance of the Romans and give Tigranes time to prepare to meet them. Lucullus annihilated this force without trouble and advanced upon Tigranocerta. When Tigranes saw how he was caught unprepared he left his capital and retired into the Taurus mountains to reorganize his forces and subsequently to teach the invaders a lesson. The Roman general, ever alert to all the moves of his enemies, began to harass the gathering divisions of Tigranes' army, and destroyed or scattered them after cornering them in isolated places. The King of Kings, seeing that he was dealing with an army unlike any he had fought, thought it wise to get out of the reach of the enemy and retired into the interior, leaving Tigranocerta at the mercy of the invaders. His retreat was so hasty that he even left his treasures and his wives and concubines in the royal city.

#### THE CAPTURE OF TIGRANOCERTA

Tigranocerta was at once invested by the Romans. The suburbs surrendered without resistance but the city proper and the citadel fought fiercely. The defenders threw down missiles and boiled naphta upon the besiegers and kept them from capturing the city. Tigranes sent an army which piercing the enemy lines entered the citadel, and taking the treasures of the

king and his women sallied forth and safely rejoined the King of Kings in the mountains.

In spite of the experienced advice of Mithradates not to fight the Romans in an open battle, Tigranes marched to Tigranocerta with his reorganized army, to relieve his beleaguered city by giving the Roman legions an open battle. The Armenian army, strengthened with the contingents of his subject kings, arrived before the imperial city and prepared to give battle to the Romans. Even here one of the seasoned generals of Mithradates advised Tigranes to avoid a frontal attack and instead to encircle the Roman forces with the Armenian cavalry, and cutting their communication, to force them into submission through starvation. But the proud fighter of many great battles would not listen to such advice, considering it to be cowardly and unworthy of a veteran warrior.

Lucullus, leaving part of his army to keep up the siege of the city, took the rest with him and marched against Tigranes. According to a Roman historian, Tigranes remarked upon seeing the advancing Roman soldiers: "If these men have come as envoys of Rome they are too numerous; if they have come to fight me they are too few." But strategy and the Roman discipline proved to be of greater value than numbers, and Lucullus was crowned with victory. The Armenian army, impeded with the heavy armor it wore, could not withstand the swift and flexible onslaught of the Roman legions and it gave way. Tigranes was forced to flee into one of his strongholds in the mountains, where Mithradates soon joined him.

After defeating Tigranes, Lucullus turned to the

beleaguered city and redoubled his efforts to capture the mighty fortress. The Armenian defenders had no difficulty in repulsing the onslaught of the Romans, but the Cilician and Cappadocian captives mutinied and the loyal troops were forced to disarm them. Even then the capture of Tigranocerta seemed to be impossible, until the Greek officers of the army of Mithradates and the Greek mercenary soldiers, plotting with the foreign elements in the city, betrayed the fortress to Lucullus by opening the gates secretly one night and allowing the Roman legions to enter the capital of Tigranes.

The loot taken by the Romans from Tigranocerta was fabulous. Each Roman soldier received eight hundred dinars (about \$150.00) from the imperial treasury, while Lucullus set aside eight thousand talents (about \$8,000,000) as a war chest for further military operations against the Armenians.

Tigranocerta was soon reduced to a provincial town, as Lucullus released all the captives Tigranes had brought and allowed them to return to their native countries. This was the reward he had promised them for betraying the Capital of Capitals into his hands.

#### MINOR ENCOUNTERS WITH ROMANS

The victory of the Romans had its beneficial effects upon Tigranes in that he checked his overconfidence in his invincibility and began to prepare to fight the foe with more circumspection. On the other hand Lucullus, encouraged by his victory at Tigrano-

certa, was preparing to push further into this new territory and break the power of the Armenian king altogether. So after passing the winter of 68 B.C. in Cordyene, he began his advance into Armenia on the following summer by crossing the Taurus mountains. This time the goal of the Roman general was Artaxata, the old Capital of the Armenian kingdom.

Tigranes and Mithradates were watching the movements of the Roman legions. Their plan was to allure them into the interior, thus rendering the protection of their line of communication very difficult. Lucullus, encouraged by the absence of resistance, advanced far into the country until, on the banks of the Arazani, he was engaged in battle by the forces of the two kings. Mithradates was in command of the infantry, while Tigranes had placed himself at the head of the cavalry. The battle of Arazani was fierce. The Romans were not only harassed by the well disciplined army of the two allies, but also the climate of the country, on account of its extreme violence, began to effect their morale. The outcome of the contest was the demoralization of the Romans and their forced retreat south into the warm climate of Mesopotamia.

What Lucullus was unable to do in the north he tried to accomplish in the south. In northern Mesopotamia, which was in Armenian possession, he invested to the fortified city of Nisibin which he captured after a long and arduous siege.

But Tigranes and Mithradates were not staying idle. The Armenian army invaded Cappadocia once more and put to flight the king who had been the tool

of the Romans. The Roman legions could not withstand the terrific onslaught of the two old and embattled kings and retreated before them, leaving many dead and wounded. The two aged kings pursued the fleeing Romans, and wherever they went in Asia Minor, they were acclaimed as liberators by the natives. But these reverses to the Roman arms in the East had their repercussion in Rome. Lucullus was recalled by the Senate and Pompey, the ablest general of the day and one of the greatest soldiers Rome has produced, was given the command of the Roman forces in Asia Minor.

#### THE REVOLT OF TIGRANES JUNIOR

While Tigranes was fighting victoriously against the Romans in Cappadocia and Cilicia, his son and heir-apparent, Tigranes the Junior, tried to seize his father's throne. Winning over to his side some of the nobility he revolted openly against the old warrior. When Tigranes received the news of his son's treason, he rushed back with his army, and engaging the rebellious forces in battle, inflicted upon them a disastrous defeat. Tigranes Junior fled into Parthia with some of the rebel chiefs. Phraates, the Parthian king, who had remained neutral during the wars of Lucullus, not only received the treacherous prince and his followers with great show of friendliness, but he even gave his daughter in marriage to the Armenian crown prince.

All the efforts of Tigranes and Mithradates to

win Phraates to their side was futile. On the contrary the Parthian king marched into Armenia with his army and, with the help of Tigranes Junior, laid siege to Artaxata in 66 B.C. King Tigranes, having well provisioned the Capital and confident of its impregnability, retired with his army to the mountains. The Parthian king, finally despairing of the capture of Artaxata, returned to his country, after leaving part of his army with Tigranes Junior to continue the siege. Then Tigranes Senior marched against his son and after a bloody encounter under the walls of Artaxata, routed the foreign army of his son and regained all the territory captured by them. The renegade prince was forced to flee for his life, and learning of the approach of Pompey, took refuge in the camp of the Roman general and offered his services to him to fight against his own father and his own country.

Pompey came to the East and organized a large army with the firm determination of giving Asia Minor the *Pax Romana*—the Roman Peace. His first concern was to put an end to Mithradates who was considered the root of all the unrest in the Near East. With his efficient fighting machine he marched into Pontus and after one engagement he crushed the small army of Mithradates and put the old foe into flight. The King of Pontus once more set forth to go to his son-in-law and ask for his aid, but on his way he learned that Tigranes had taken a hostile attitude toward him and had even placed a price upon his head. So the old warrior, who had made even Rome tremble before his might, realized the futility of his

struggle against this western power, and left the scene of his numerous exploits never again to return. He went to the Cimmerian Bosphorus (Crimea), the only one among his once numerous possessions that had remained loyal to him.

After the flight of Mithradates Pompey marched into Armenia, led by the treacherous crown prince, and soon came in sight of Artaxata. Here he set camp and summoned the old king to submit to Rome. Tigranes realized that he could not cope with the might of Rome, whose resources seemed inexhaustible. Besides, his own forces were worn out by continuous fighting with Lucullus, with the Parthians, and with his own son. The diplomatic proficiency of the old king, however, was still alert. So he decided to save his crown by submitting himself to Pompey.

#### THE TREATY OF ARTAXATA

So it came to pass that the old warrior, wearing his resplendent imperial uniform, mounted his horse, and accompanied by an intimate retinue, rode to the Roman camp. Pompey sent forth military tribunes and officers of high standing to meet him. When the Armenian king arrived before the Roman general he greeted him in the oriental fashion. He took off his crown and made a move to fall before the Roman, when Pompey raised him and kissing him on the cheek placed his crown back upon his head. Then they sat down, Tigranes at his right and the younger Tigranes at his left side, and they discussed the situa-

tion in a friendly way, which was finally shaped into what is known as the Treaty of Artaxata.

The Armenian empire, established by the efforts of Tigranes at a huge cost to the Armenian people, was lost by the Treaty of Artaxata. Cappadocia, Cilicia, Syria, Phoenicia and Mesopotamia passed under Roman rule. Armenia proper, with a part of Assyria, were left to Tigranes, while the Province of Sophene was given to Tigranes Junior as a reward for his treachery. In addition, the King of Kings was to pay about 6000 talents as war indemnity. Armenia was to retain her independence with the condition that the kings of Armenia should have the approval of Rome before their coronation. In other words Armenia was to be a sphere of influence for Rome, in return for which the Western power was to guarantee the integrity of the country against foreign, especially Parthian, encroachments. Furthermore, Armenia, as a friend and ally of the Roman Republic, was to place her armies at the disposal of Roman generals in case of war in the Near East.

Even though the price paid by Armenia for Roman protection was quite heavy, in the long run the treaty of Artaxata became instrumental for the preservation of the country. Especially with the growing power of Parthia, Armenia alone could not long preserve her integrity and would have succumbed to the eastern neighbor and become a Persian province. Another benefit of this treaty was the opportunity it afforded the Armenians to be in constant touch with and under the influence of western civilization. This alone was to be one of the greatest factors

for the preservation of the Armenian race in their eastern atmosphere.

After the treaty of Artaxata, Tigranes ruled about ten years longer until he died at the age of eighty-five. And although he had lost the great empire he had founded with his own efforts, he left his kingdom larger than when he had inherited it. Before he died he saw the punishment of his treacherous son by Pompey himself, to whom the ambitious prince had betrayed his father and his country. For soon after the signing of the treaty, the Roman commander gave a great banquet to celebrate the establishment of friendly relations between Armenia and the Republic of Rome and he invited both Tigranes to be present. The prince, not satisfied with the treatment he received at the hands of Pompey, as he had expected to receive the crown of his father as a reward for his despicable action, refused to go to the celebration. Furthermore, he began to plot against Rome as he had done against his royal father. The result was the arrest of Tigranes junior, the restoration of Sophene to Armenia proper, and the exile of the traitor to Rome, where he was finally executed by the order of Pompey to put an end to his intrigues in Roman political circles.

The arrest of Tigranes Junior brought forth an occasion for testing the Treaty of Artaxata. King Phraates of Parthia demanded the release of his son-in-law, and when Pompey refused, he invaded Cordyene, which was under Armenian rule. Pompey at once sent one of his generals and put the Parthians



out of Armenian territory as a prompt observance of the terms of the treaty.

Tigranes was not only the greatest conqueror that Armenia has produced, but his work was of immense political importance to the Armenians. His ambition was to become a great world power, which he might have realized at an earlier age. He was frustrated by the methodical progress of the Roman empire, but he at least saved his kingdom and made peace with Rome on terms which were to prove beneficial for the preservation of the Armenian people.

From the Roman point of view the independence of Armenia was to serve another purpose. It was to become a buffer-state against the growing Parthian empire. This placed Armenia into a very dangerous position and made of it a battleground for the continuous struggle for supremacy between the two World Powers of the east and of the west. This condition was to continue throughout Armenian history and to prove very disastrous to the political as well as physical life of the race.

The national unity to which the inhabitants of Armenia were striving, even during the reign of the Urartu kings, was finally realized under Tigranes. It was he who consolidated the two former Persian satrapies into a united kingdom, bringing within its borders all the territory that both ethnically and physically formed the complete frame of a state. It was for the first time that all the Armenians were brought into an ethnical and political unit under his rule. And the framework that he wrought for this state was so strong that it succeeded "to preserve its

unity and independence for nearly five hundred years. It was in this chrysalis that the interaction of religion and language produced the new germ of modern Armenian nationality; and when the chrysalis was rent at last, the nation emerged so strongly grown that it could brave the buffets of the outer world."\*

\* James Bryce, "The Treatment of Armenians."

## CHAPTER VI

## ARTAVAZD AND HIS SONS

Crassus and his Campaigns against Parthia.—Mark Antony and his Ominous Shadow over Armenia.—Artavazd.—Artavazd Strives to Save his People.—Artavazd a Captive in Egypt.—Artaxias II, Son of Artavazd II.—Tigranes IV Son of Artavazd II.—Artavazd III Son of Artavazd II.—Tigranes VI Son of Artavazd II.—Foreign Kings on Armenian Throne.—End of Artaxiad Dynasty.

Tigranes II was succeeded by his son Artavazd II (cir. 56-34 B.C.), who throughout his reign had to use all his diplomatic ability to stave off disasters, which the rivalry between Rome and Parthia was already threatening to bring. Furthermore, he had to be guided by the imminence of danger in deciding to take sides. When the Roman army was near, he had to play his part as an ally of the western Republic, but when the Parthians got the upper hand, he was forced to make peace with them and show himself in sympathy with their cause. This policy of constant shifting of front was to end in disaster for Artavazd, but it succeeded to a certain degree in sparing his people from physical destruction.

Artavazd's troubles began after the formation of the triumvirate in Rome, which was composed of the three great politico-military leaders of the day—Pompey, Caesar and Crassus. The first war-like moves of the Parthians brought Crassus to the East in the autumn of 56 B.C. Artavazd, as an ally of the Romans, advised the old general to pass his legions through

Armenia and attack the Parthians at their weakest point. But Crassus scorned the advice of the Armenian king and betook himself and his legions into Mesopotamia, where disaster and death awaited him. While the Romans were in Mesopotamia, Orodes, king of Parthia, invaded Armenia to prevent Artavazd from going to the aid of Crassus. In the face of this danger, Artavazd asked the Roman commander once more to change his strategy and return to Armenia for a new plan of action. Crassus was enraged by the failure of Artavazd to send him the Armenian contingent, as stipulated in the Treaty of Artaxata, and declared that he would settle his account with the Armenian king after he had crushed the Parthians. Whereupon Artavazd made peace with Orodes and as a sign of friendship gave his sister in marriage to the son of the Parthian king.

Crassus, in the meanwhile, was encountering much trouble in Mesopotamia. His Arab guides, bought by the Parthian commander, misled his forces and finally delivered them to the enemy. Crassus was taken captive and his head being severed, was sent to King Orodes at Artaxata, where as a guest of Artavazd he was attending the wedding of his son to the Armenian princess.

## MARK ANTONY

Seventeen years later Marcus Antonius, who had been one of the most trusted lieutenants of Julius Caesar, came to Armenia to avenge the death of

Crassus and to re-establish Roman prestige in the East. Antonius had an army of 120,000 men when he entered Armenia as a friend and ally. Adding an Armenian contingent to his forces he set out hastily against the eastern foes. Partly through over-confidence in his own ability and partly through misjudgment of the enemy, the Roman commander left half of his forces behind and attacked the city of Phraata in Media. The united forces of Media and Parthia, however, were too much for Antony's overzealousness and he was forced to retreat, after an inglorious defeat, into the friendly territory of Armenia. Artavazd, having foreseen the defeat, had brought back the Armenian contingent without participating in the battle.

This defeat rankled in Marcus Antonius to the end of his career. Upon his return to Alexandria from his unsuccessful campaign in Asia, he attributed his defeat to the treachery of king Artavazd, and from that time on he planned to avenge himself upon the Armenian ruler. He plotted despicably, and for a long time, to trap Artavazd. First he called the Armenian king to Antioch on the pretense of discussing the marriage of Artavazd's daughter to Prince Alexander, the son of Cleopatra and himself. When this failed he went to Nicopolis with an army and sent word to Artavazd to come there for a military council, which, he said, he was holding in preparation of a new campaign against the Parthians. The Armenian king avoided this trap too by his diplomatic answers, until finally the perfidious Roman took his army and marched upon Artaxata. Even then the

wily lover of Cleopatra used every kind of ruse to get Artavazd in his power, and partly by the intercession of neighboring friendly kings, partly by his hypocritical missiles, in which he feigned friendship, Antonius succeeded in having the Armenian king come over to his camp. Artavazd was at once arrested and the looting of the country followed his capture. The Roman soldiers pillaged even the temples and a golden statue of the goddess Anahit was broken into pieces and divided among the officers. The Armenians were enraged by the perfidy of the Roman commander. The Armenian army became restless and proclaiming Artaxias, one of the sons of Artavazd, as king, revolted against the Romans. There was some fighting but Artaxias, realizing the superior strength of the Romans, considered it wise to take refuge in the Parthian court, where Phraates IV received him cordially and promised to help him to avenge himself upon the Romans.

Artavazd was taken to Egypt with his wives and children in golden chains and displayed before Cleopatra as trophies of the great victories of Antonius in the East. This disgraceful act of Mark Antony was to be the cause of his own downfall and destruction. For Octavian, who later became the first emperor of Rome, used the ignominious action of Antony, in treating an ally of the Roman Republic, as a weapon against him and received the sanction of the Senate to punish the man who had thus brought disgrace to the name of Rome. A civil war followed and after the battle of Actium, where their forces were decisively defeated, Antony and Cleopatra fled to Alex-

andria and poured their wrath upon the head of the helpless captive king of Armenia. Artavazd was decapitated and his head was sent as a present to his implacable enemy, the king of Media.

Thus ended the life of one of the most lovable and most erudite kings of Armenia. For Artavazd was a well-known poet and dramatist, and his plays, written in Greek, were presented not only in the Hellenized eastern countries but in Athens and Rome as well.

#### ARTAXIAS II AND HIS BROTHERS

After the arrest of Artavazd and the flight of his son Artaxias to Parthia, Antonius planned to crown his own son Alexander as king of Armenia. Alexander being under age, the King of Media was appointed as regent. But soon Artaxias came to Armenia with the Parthian army and fought to regain his heritage. The resistance of the Median king was successful until the recall of a great number of the Roman garrison to take part in the civil wars of Rome. Then Artaxias and the Parthians succeeded in defeating the Medes and taking their king as prisoner. Artaxias entered the capital amid the rejoicings of his people and was acclaimed as their king. As an act of vengeance he passed through the sword every Roman soldier that had remained in Armenia and Media.

But Rome could not long remain indifferent to the affairs of the east. So when Octavian became the first emperor under the name of Augustus Caesar, he tried to undo the blunders of Antonius. Through

peaceful means he succeeded in winning the friendship of the Parthians and in forming a strong pro-Roman faction among the Armenian nobility. As Artaxias II was decidedly and violently anti-Roman in his sympathies, the pro-Roman faction assassinated him and asked Augustus to give them a new king. The Roman emperor had a good supply of these in the sons of Artavazd, who were taken to Rome and kept there by Augustus in circumstances worthy of their station.

Tigranes IV was another son of Artavazd II who ruled over Armenia after the assassination of his brother Artaxias. Being an appointee of Augustus he was a puppet of Rome and ruled from 20 to 6 B.C.

Against the pro-Roman faction there was the national or pro-Parthian faction in Armenia. The two groups rose and fell in influence as the Roman and Parthian influence in the country alternated. After the death of Tigranes IV the national party placed upon the throne his son Tigranes V without first getting the approval of Augustus. A Roman army was at once dispatched which deposed the new king and placed a third son of Artavazd upon the throne in 5 B.C. This king, Artavazd III, proved to be unpopular and after a reign of three years he was deposed by the people.

Tigranes V returned with a Parthian army and once more ascended the throne. His reign was cut short by his death in a campaign against a neighboring kingdom. Then Augustus sent Caius Caesar, his grandson and heir-apparent of the Roman crown, with an army. The young prince placed upon the

Armenian throne a foreigner, Ariobarzan, the son of the Median king, in accordance with the wishes of the pro-Roman faction. The national party revolted against this arrangement and in the fighting that ensued young Caesar was fatally wounded. Ariobarzan did not live long and after his death Augustus put his son Artavazd IV on the Armenian throne. But the nationalists plotted against his life and he was assassinated after a reign of three years.

Augustus appointed a fourth son of Artavazd II as king of Armenia. This was Tigranes VI (7-12 A.D.) who was later deposed by the Roman Emperor. The Armenians then placed upon the throne the widow of Tigranes V, Queen Erato, who was also deposed after a reign of two years.

Thus the dynasty of Artaxiads, after reigning nearly two hundred years, and giving the country some of the most colorful rulers, came to an end at the beginning of our era.

## FOREIGN KINGS

For almost fifty years after the end of the Artaxiad dynasty the political influence of Armenia was at its lowest ebb. The rivalry between the two hostile factions—the pro-Parthians or nationalists and the pro-Romans—became so violent that the country was rent by civil wars, invasions (now by Romans, now by Parthians), and revolutions. When one of the factions became strong enough to start a revolution, the reigning king, who had the sympathy of the op-

posing faction, was either killed or was forced to abdicate.

For two years after the expulsion of Queen Erato the country remained in a state of anarchy. The pro-Roman faction got the upper hand and they placed upon the Armenian throne one prince Onones, a son of the former king of Parthia. Onones was educated in Rome and had the confidence of the Emperor. But he was not allowed to remain long on the throne, and after a turbulent reign of two years he was removed by the Romans to placate the nationalists and was succeeded by Xeno, a son of the king of Pontus and a relative of Tiberius Caesar, the Roman emperor. Xeno was crowned under the Armenian name of Artaxias III, and because of his kinship with Caesar, he succeeded in reigning for sixteen years (18-34 A.D.).

After the natural death of Artaxias III the Parthian king sent his own son Arsaces to Armenia and placed him upon the Armenian throne. Tiberius Caesar, instead of sending an army and starting a new war, incited the Iberian (Georgian) king against the Armenians, by promising him to give the Armenian crown to a member of his family. Pharsmanes, the king of Georgia, accepted the proposition and sent his brother Mithradates with an army into Armenia. Mithradates succeeded by bribery in having Arsaces poisoned. Thus usurping the throne, he reigned for several years until the death of Tiberius. When Caligula succeeded Tiberius he adopted a policy of friendship toward the Parthians and upon their request he recalled Mithradates to Rome. The policy of Rome underwent another change when Claudius

became emperor, and Mithradates was allowed to return to Armenia and reclaim his throne. Mithradates fell a victim of a plot by his own nephew, a son of Pharsmanes, who having murdered his uncle, usurped his throne and became a hated tyrannical ruler of Armenia as King Radimisdes.

But he was not allowed to rule long. His violent nature and his criminal record made him hateful to his subjects. Moreover it served the cause of the nationalists who held Rome responsible for the rule of this monster. It was the last straw to break the camel's back, for the Armenians, disgusted with the violent events of the last fifty years and enraged by the high-handedness of Radimisdes, decided to support wholeheartedly the cause of the nationalist party. This final triumph of the pro-Parthian orientation of the nationalists opened a new chapter in the history of Armenia, by bringing a branch of the reigning Arsacid dynasty of Parthia upon the Armenian throne.

## CHAPTER VII

### ARMENIAN MYTHOLOGY

Armenian Paganism.—Foreign Influences.—“The Seven Altars.”  
—Aramazd.—Anahit.—Mihr.—Tir.—Astlik.—Nane.—Vahagn.—The  
Spirits.—The Ancient Armenian Calendar.

Armenian paganism was founded upon nature worship, and this fact has led many to the conclusion that in its earliest form the Armenian religion was monotheistic. Everything that inspired awe and fear in nature was worshipped as one form of the manifestation of a supreme being which they could not grasp with their minds. Thus the sun, the moon, the stars, lightning, storms, mountains, water and even trees were considered divine.

The contact with other peoples, however, brought some changes in the Armenian religion. The Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Iranians, the Greeks and even the Phoenicians influenced the religious beliefs of the Armenians. But the fundamental native concept of religion persisted in great measure and even though deities were freely borrowed from all the above-mentioned peoples, they were eventually Armenianized so that Armenian paganism retained a distinct indigenous mark.

The principal deities in the Armenian Pantheon seem to the casual observer to be the well-known gods and goddesses of neighboring peoples bearing Armenianized names. Thus Aramazd sounds like the

Ormizd of the Persians which the latter have taken from the Zendist Ahura-Mazda. Also the Armenian Aramazd has the characteristics and the position of the Greek Zeus and the Roman Jupiter. And yet Aramazd was native both in his general concept and in his manifestation.

Looking at the development of this national religion from a historical point of view we get a picture somewhat like this:

When the Indo-Europeans conquered Urartu they imposed upon the natives their language, their cruder forms of civilization and their religion. Naturally the Urartuans too left marks of their traits and of their culture on the newcomers. This combined Armeno-Urartuan concept of religion is then the basis of the Armenian paganism. The Babylonian influence could have come before or after the fusion of the two races. The Persian or Iranian certainly came later. Then the contact with the Greeks began with the conquests of Alexander the Great and continued with the domination of the Seleucids and the interrelationship between Armenia and Syria. Tigranes the Great was a conqueror of foreign gods as well as countries and he introduced into Armenia not only worship of Greek gods but of many other races. Of all the foreign influences the Greek seems to be the strongest.

And yet the chief characteristic of zoroastrianism, the rivalry between good (as personified in Ahura Mazda) and evil (as personified in Ahriman) was altogether absent from the Armenian religion. There was no obstructive power opposing Aramazd who was

not only supreme but the "creator of heaven and earth."

Another striking difference between the Armenian and Iranian paganism was the almost complete absence of goddesses from the latter while the Armenian Pantheon contained at least three female deities among the principal figures of the celestials.

The numbers three and seven had a mysterious hold upon the imagination of the early races. Thus most religions of ancient time had triads formed of their principal gods. Among the pagan Armenians Aramazd, Anahit and Vahagn were grouped in a triad. But such a trinity does not seem to have formed the basis of a religious system in Armenia. As for the number seven the Armenians seem to have accepted the force of its magic, as evidenced by the "seven altars of the temples" mentioned by ancient Armenian historians, which in its essence is the Armenian Pantheon.

The "Seven altars" according to Agathangelos, a historian of the IV century A.D., were as follows:

#### THE SEVEN ALTARS OF THE TEMPLES

<i>Armenian name of gods</i>	<i>Location of Worship</i>	<i>Greek name of gods</i>
Aramazd	Fortress of Ani (Kamakh)	Zeus
Anahit	Erez, Ashtishat	Artemis
Mihr	Bagaraij	Hephaestos
Tir or Tiur	Erazmuin	Apollo
Astlik (Astghik)	Ashtishat	Aphrodite
Barshamin	Thordan	Belshemin (Assyrian)
Nane	Thiln	Athene

To these seven Agathangelos adds an eighth altar which was dedicated to Vahagn, Herakles (Hercules) in Greek, and located at Ashtishat, a great religious center. The special mention of the "eighth altar" as an addition seems to be an effort to preserve the magic of seven as well as to stress the importance of Vahagn, who could not be left out of the Pantheon in spite of the sacred number seven.

### ARAMAZD

Aramazd, the father of all gods, was the supreme deity in the Armenian Pantheon. He was the "architect of the universe," and "the creator of heaven and earth." The whole concept of monotheism was concentrated in him, for all the other deities were only manifestations of the invisible Aramazd. Although the name is a corrupted form of the Persian Ahura-Mazda he was not an exact duplicate of his Iranian prototype.

This supreme Armenian deity was called great, wise and brave. He was peace-loving and never figured as a war god like the Semitic supreme deities. His goodness was one of his greatest characteristics as exemplified in his title of *Amenaber*, "bringer of all (good) things." Another great characteristic of Aramazd was his generosity. He was the giver of fertility and the dispenser of abundance and fatness to the land.

We have no information about the parentage of Aramazd. He might have been conceived as the beginning of all things. Furthermore he was a bachelor

god and there was no Hera or Juno connected with him in ties of marriage. And yet he was the father of all gods and especially of Mihr, Anahit and Nane, whom he begot without the co-operation of a female deity.

Aramazd had many temples in Armenia, the most famous among them being that of Ani (Kamakh), in the district of Daranali. This temple also contained the tombs of the Armenian kings. The priests who officiated in this temple were of high descent, some of them being royal princes. St. Gregory destroyed this temple of Aramazd and his famous statue during his campaign against paganism at the beginning of the fourth century. Another renowned temple of Aramazd was at Bagavan, the city of gods.

### ANAHIT

As Aramazd was the greatest so Anahit was the most popular deity of the Armenians. She too probably was originally borrowed from the Persians or Babylonians and was later identified with the Greek Artemis, but she was eventually more Armenianized than any other borrowed deity. Agathangelos describes the goddess in highly complimentary terms by making king Tiridates say: "The great lady (queen) Anahit, who is the glory and the life-giver of the human race, whom all kings honor . . . who is the mother of all sobriety and a benefactress of all mankind, born of the great Aramazd. . . . The great Anahit, through whom Armenia lives and maintains her existence." Another testimony about the high esteem the Ar-



menians had for this deity is found in Strabo, the Greek historian, who says that "Armenians honor all things sacred to the Persians, but above everything Armenians honor Anahit."

Anahit was the goddess of human fecundity. Children were under her maternal care and she watched over their growth affectionately. She was the patroness of the whole country. As a merciful mother her aid was sought for the sick and the afflicted. King Artaxias in his last sickness sent a special messenger to her temple at Erez to seek her aid for his restoration to health, but he died before the messenger returned.

No other deity was the object of so much love and adoration among ancient peoples as Anahit was among the Armenians. Numerous temples were dedicated to her and a whole district, with the holy city of Erez, was called the province of Anahit. Her temple at Erez was not only the richest but the most unusual sanctuary of the antiquity according to the Roman historian Pliny. The province was given to the temple by an Armenian king. A golden statue of the goddess, which ancient historians (Strabo, Dion, Pliny) consider the first of its kind, was one of the chief attractions of this temple. That golden image might account for the title given the goddess by the Armenians who called their favorite deity "mother of gold" (oskiamair) and "born of gold" (oskiatsin).

Near the temple at Erez a large meadow was reserved for the sacred bullocks destined to be sacrificed to the goddess. The animals were branded and left to graze in the meadow. Twice a year, in the

spring and in the autumn, the feasts of Anahit were celebrated with great pomp and ceremony. The greatest holiday was on the fifteenth day of Navasard, the first month of the Armenian year. On that day the Chief Priest would lead a procession of priests and pilgrims around the temple, carrying the image of the goddess and chanting religious hymns. The sacerdotal ceremonies were followed by secular merry-making in the form of dances, feasts, games, etc. The celebration inevitably ended in orgies in which men and women took part freely.

This and other temples of Anahit as well as those of other deities were destroyed by St. Gregory the Illuminator and his fanatic followers as soon as the Armenian nation was converted into Christianity officially. The rich estates and other valuable properties of the pagan temples were given to the Church.

### MIHR

This god of fire was undoubtedly borrowed from the Persians and later was identified with the Greek Hephaestos. Even though a very important deity he never became popular in Armenia and was finally superceded by the national god Vahagn. It is curious, however, to note that the Armenians have preserved to the present day their fire festival. To be sure it is now celebrated in Christian form, but **probably it** still falls on the same day as its pagan prototype, for the Christian fire festival of the Armenians is in February, the month dedicated to Mihr and in his name called Mehekan. This god has persisted among

the Armenians in another form too—its presence in proper names used extensively, such as Mihran, Mihrdat (Mithradates), Mihranush, etc.

### TIR

Tir or Tiur was an Armenianized combination of the Greek gods Apollo and Hermes. He was the scribe of Aramazd and also his messenger. In addition to this he was also recognized as the patron of learning and art. His temple just outside the city of Artaxata must have served as an oracle as it was called Erazmuin standing perhaps for interpreter of dreams. The fact that one of the months of the Armenian calendar was called **Tre**, in honor of this deity, shows how important he must have been.

The scribe of Aramazd had also the duty of conducting the souls of men after their death to the other world. An echo of this still lingers among the Armenians in their use of the expression "May the Scribe take you" as a mild curse spoken half-jokingly. Further reminders of Tir are to be found in the proper names of Tiran, Tirdat, Tirodz, etc.

### ASTLIK OR ASTGHIK

In the city of Ashtishat, a religious center of pagan Armenia, the three main sanctuaries were given the collective name of the Vahevahian temple, and dedicated to Anahit, Astlik and Vahagn. The last two were considered lovers and the sanctuary of

Astlik was significantly called the "chamber of Vahagn." This designation is not surprising as Astlik was the goddess of love and passion, corresponding to the Greek Aphrodite. In old Armenian legends she was considered a daughter of Noah, born after the deluge, and a sister of the three Titans who fought each other in what is called the war of the Titans in ancient mythology. Astlik acting as conciliator, put an end to the terrific fight and herself settled in the Armenian province of Taraunia.

Rose was the flower dedicated to the goddess of love, and the dove, considered a passionate bird, was her favorite. Her great festival came at the commencement of summer under the name of Vardavar which is still observed by the Armenians under the Christian guise of Transfiguration of Christ. The old name Vardavar has persisted together with some other customs from the pagan times, such as sprinkling water upon each other, flying doves and pigeons, playing games, and other secular festivities.

### NANE

Nane like Anahit was a daughter of Aramazd, born without a mother. According to old Armenian traditions she was Athene of the Hellenes, imported by king Tigranes and placed in the town of Thiln. There is no further mention of this goddess although she was placed in the Armenian Pantheon as one of the deities of the "seven sanctuaries." Nane was considered a dispenser of wisdom and she was a patroness of war.

## BARSHAMIN

Barshamin was another imported or captive deity that Tigranes the Great brought home with him probably from Phoenicia. Aside from the mention of his name among the seven chief deities there is no indication as to the nature or the role of this god. His temple was in the village of Thordan, the province of Daranali. Some writers have considered Barshamin as a female deity.

## VAHAGN

Even though Vahagn was not included among the original seven gods of the Armenian Pantheon, he was given the special importance of supplementing the list and becoming the eighth great god. Not only that, but his popularity was so great that he soon surpassed most of the deities of the Pantheon and was placed at the very side of Aramazd and Anahit, forming with these a triad.

Vahagn seems to have been a truly national deity. He was a god of fire, also a sun-god, the god of war, the god of victory, the god of lightning, one of whose chief missions being the killing of dragons.

There are many theories as to the origin of this god. Many have tried to identify him with the Avestic Verethraghna, with whom he has certain points of similarity. The Indian mythology has an Agni, a fire god, to whom also the Armenian Vahagn bears similarity. A much more striking resemblance both in

names and in their other characteristics has been discovered to the Phrygian god Hagnis.

About his nature and origin a fragment of sacred song about Vahagn, preserved in the writings of Moses of Khorene, is of greatest value. The song was taken by the Armenian historian from the famous bards of Golthan district, who probably sang it even at the time of Khorenatzi. Here are the lines that have been preserved:

The heaven and the earth travailed,  
Also travailed the purple sea,  
And the travail held  
The red reed in the sea.  
Through the hollow of the reed a smoke rose,  
Through the hollow of the reed a flame rose,  
Out of the flame ran forth a youth,  
He had hair of fire,  
He had a beard of flame,  
And his eyes were suns.

To give an idea of the pagan rituals we will reproduce a passage from Agathangelos, the historian. Writing about the sacrifices to be made to the gods by an Armenian king returning from a victorious expedition, says the historian:

"He (the king) commanded the seven great altars of Armenia, and he honored the sanctuaries of his ancestors, the Arsacids with white bullocks, white rams, white horses and mules, with gold and silver ornaments and gold embroidered silken coverings, with golden wreaths, silver sacrificial basins, desirable vases set with precious stones, splendid garments,

and beautiful ornaments. Also he gave a fifth of his booty and great presents to the priests."

The priests were very rich and influential. In addition to money and precious objects they were given large tracts of lands—a whole province as in the case of the temple of Anahit at Erez—by the kings and nobles.

### OTHER DEITIES

Of the other numerous deities some of the important ones were:

**Vanatour** was the god of hospitality. By some scholars he is considered as the god of the New Year too, while others identify the name as an attribute of **Aramazd**.

**Spandaramet** or **Sandaramet** is of zendic origin and was identified with the Greek Dionysos (Bacchus). He was the god of the Earth and for that reason he was offered the best product of the earth—wine. Probably by the process of association **Sandaramet** became the god of the dead (buried in the earth).

### SPIRITS

Pagan Armenians believed in spirits who were identified with good and evil influences in their lives. The **Kaches**, which has come to mean brave, dwelt in the abysses of Mount Massis and were among the good spirits. **Arlezes** were the spirits who brought back to life the heroes, who fell on the battlefield, by licking their wounds. **Orun** was a demi-god of male ghosts and **Urhi** or **Uhi** was the demi-goddess of the females. **Chars** were the evil spirits, each one of them

being considered the cause of a misfortune, an accident, an illness and other calamitous events. Later under the influence of Achaemenian Persia the spirits were divided into two classes, the good spirits being called **Hreshtaks** (angels) and the evil ones **Devs** (devils). **Shahapets** were the genii or ghosts of places such as fields, woods, mountains, houses, wells and especially graveyards.

Considering the foreign influence upon Armenian mythology it is impossible to reconstruct and present it as a complete spiritual manifestation of the Armenian race. It should be studied in the light of those foreign intrusions in order to bring out the Armenian element in it.

### THE PAGAN CALENDAR

The calendar of pagan Armenians had twelve months of thirty days each. The remaining five days were classed separately under the name of "Iaveliatz" which means supplementary. There is a confusion as to the beginning of the year. In ancient times the natural year began in March and yet the first month in the Armenian calendar was **Navasard** which corresponds to August. Some authorities explain this by considering **Navasard** as the first month of the official year in contrast with the natural year. The **Amanor** (New Year's Day) was celebrated as a great national and semi-religious holiday with great festivities.

These festivities were of such great importance that not only the royalty and the nobility of the land attended them, but the common people of the whole

country flocked to the city of Ashtishat for the celebration of Amanor. It was the feast of feasts, the rendezvous of the religiously devout as well as of the romantic youth, the meeting place of warriors as well as athletes. Here they came attired in their best clothes to receive the annual contentment of their hearts' desire.

Bagavan also became a center of Amanor festivities, probably through the concern of an Armenian king to give all the people an opportunity to enjoy the great national holiday. As its name signifies it was the town of "bagins," sanctuaries, hence a city of the gods. Here king Tigranes had built a huge hostelry for the pilgrims to commemorate the name of his brother Mazhan who had been the Chief Priest. The pilgrims were given free lodging and food from the generous sacrifices that were made to the gods.

The names of the Armenian months and their English equivalents are as follows:

1. Navasard	August
2. Horri	September
3. Sahmi	October
4. Tre	November
5. Kaghotz	December
6. Aratz	January
7. Mehekan	February
8. Areg	March
9. Ahekan	April
10. Mareri	May
11. Margatz	June
12. Hroditz	July
13. Haveliatz	Supplementary

Christian Armenians used the Julian Calendar until a few years ago when they too, together with other Eastern Christian peoples, adopted the Gregorian Calendar, thus completing the uniform use of the latter system throughout the Christian World.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SOCIAL ORDER

The Feudal System in Armenia.—The Classes.—The Naharars and Their Political Offices.—“Azats” and “Ostaniks.”—The Clergy.—“Ramik” and “Shinakan.”—The Townspeople.—The Struggle between King and Naharars.

In order to understand the next period in the Armenian history, the period that has been known as the age of Arsacid or Arshakuni kings, it is necessary to know the social, economic and political order of the country. For, as we shall see, it is this social and political system that plays the most decisive role in the history of this and subsequent periods up to the XV century.

It has been definitely proved that the economic system prevailing in Armenia at this time was very similar to that which prevailed in Europe from the beginning of the second millennium of our era to the French Revolution, namely the feudal system. This economic order was based upon the ownership of land, which was the chief asset in the wealth of a country, upon its distribution as well as its exploitation.

The exact or approximate beginning of the feudal system in Armenia cannot be easily determined, due to the lack of documents. But there are ample references to the prevalence of the system and its general application during the Arsacid period in the historical works of the ancient Armenian writers. Moreover

these same sources clearly indicate that this economic system of exploiting the land through serfs, and the consequent political supremacy of the land-owning class, as well as the existence of well defined social classes, was not carried on in a hap-hazard manner, but in a well established and well regulated way. That in itself is evidence that the feudal system was established in Armenia long before the Christian era, probably during or immediately preceding the reign of Artaxias, the first founder of Armenian independence.

### THE FEUDAL SYSTEM

Before we study the social, political and economic aspects of this system in detail, it is very appropriate to point out the influence and the instrumentality of the geography of Armenia in bringing about the feudal system. For as we have already seen, due to its geography, the country was divided into numerous kingdoms, large and small, at the very earliest times. The geography of Armenia had been unfavorable to ethnic union and with the exception of a few unusually powerful kings, no ruler ever succeeded in establishing a strong centralized government. The geographical divisions of the proto-Armenians did not disappear with the passing out of the local kings. They were either replaced by the chieftains of the invaders or the local rulers themselves became members of the new aristocracy and continued to hold sway over their domains. And when in the course of time, through evolution, their domains became feudal holdings, the

country found itself in the possession of a land-owning aristocracy who ruled politically over their possessions, not as kings but as Feudal Lords.

The economic foundation of the feudal system, upon which was erected the social and political structure, was the tenure of land. Theoretically all land belonged to the king, who partitioned and gave it to his loyal followers, on condition of some service. The condition usually consisted of military service to the king, who being the owner of the whole country, was responsible for its defense. The division of the land was further carried on by the high lords who had received their share from the king. They in turn gave large or small tracts of land to the petty nobility and to the peasants on condition of service. At the end it was always the peasant who worked upon the land and made it productive. For this he gave the lord, who had given him the tenure, a tax or fee and at times his military service as a common soldier. The peasant thus was attached to the land and became a serf. Although he was free to do so he seldom would leave the soil as he could find no other occupation. The landowner was his master not only economically but politically as well. The land given to the serfs was called a feud or a fief and remained in their possession from generation to generation, although the ownership remained always with the lord.

In ancient Armenia just like in mediaeval Europe society was composed of two general classes: (a) An aristocracy in possession of the soil and composed of warriors and priests; (b) A mass of peasants established on large domains. The parallel goes still

further and in order to make the social structure of Armenia more clear we will make a general comparison between the classes existing in mediaeval Europe and those of ancient Armenia.

In feudal Europe the king was at the top of the social ladder. Next to him came the nobility of the highest rank, who were almost independent rulers. They were the dukes and the counts who had large domains under their suzerainty. They were followed by noblemen of the second class, called barons, who were the vassals of the higher class. On a lower rung of the ladder were the viscounts and below them the petty nobility who were attached to the noblemen of higher rank in the capacity of vassals. The serfs were at the foot of the ladder, attached to the aristocrats of all ranks as toilers of the soil and producers of wealth.

#### THE NAHARARS

In Armenia too the king was on the highest rung of the social ladder. Like all oriental potentates he was an absolute monarch, an autocratic ruler. His will was the supreme law of the land. Being the political as well as the military head of the people, he alone had the power to declare war or to negotiate peace, to administer the finances of the state, to make alliances and to give the final verdict in judicial matters. He had absolute power over the lives and possessions of his subjects. By a royal decree and without any judicial hearing he could dispossess, incarcerate or

condemn to death any individual, regardless of his rank or station in life.

The high aristocracy, which came next to the king in the social order, was called "nakhararuthiun" or "nahararuthiun." The word "naharar" (a feudal lord of high rank) has been verified to have the meaning of "chief or lord of the land." The "nahararuthiuns," like the seigneuries of mediaeval times, differed from each other both in size and importance. There were two classes of naharars called the senior or first crown naharars and the junior or second crown naharars.

The naharars were absolute rulers in their domains as far as their subjects were concerned. They had the same autocratic powers in their provinces or districts as the king had over the country. They had their private armies, their treasuries, their courts and their political institutions, all under their direct supervision. The naharars combined in their persons the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches of the government, having the power of life and death over their subjects. In fact they were vassal kings, patterned after the sovereign himself. They even had thrones which unlike the king's was of silver. When they were with the king they were privileged to sit upon red cushions. Other marks of their rank was the wearing of earrings on both ears, the wearing of a red shoe on one foot and the carrying of a golden rod upon which the name and the rank of their nobility was inscribed.

The most important noble families or "nahararu-

thiuns" were the Aldznis,\* Gugars,\* Corduis,\* Dsophs,\* Siunis, Angeltuns,\* Bagratunis, Horhorunis, Ardsrunis, Mamikonians, Moks, Rshtunis, Apahunis, Kamsarakans, Amatunis, Kachberunis etc. The titles of respect and designation is given to the naharars were "Ter" (lord, master), "tanuter" (master of the house, landlord), and "nahapet" (patriarchal chief). The other male members of a naharar's family were called "sepuh," while the heir to the title of naharar was a senior "sepuh."

The naharars lived in their castles (amrotz) which were built in natural strongholds and further fortified by huge walls, massed rocks, pits and ditches and other fortifications. His castle was also a naharar's seat of government. It was built in such a way that in case of war all the peasants of the locality, who were

\* The asterisk denotes a Bdeskhkuthiun.

The Armenian aristocracy, unlike the European, had no special titles for the nobility. There were however several houses of naharars which were called Bdeskhkuthiuns, and the chief of the house a Bdeskhk. Probably they were of a higher rank than the naharars and they were designated also by such titles as "guardians of frontiers" or "guardians of flanks," as their domains were at the frontiers of Armenia. The four principal Bdeskhkuthiuns in the Arsacid period and their geographical locations were:

1. Aldznis in the south, on the Assyrian border.
2. Sophene in the southwest, on the Syrian border.
3. Gugars in the north, on the Iberian border.
4. Noshirakans in the southeast, on the Persian border.

Some authorities consider the Bdeskhks as "almost equal to the king." It is noteworthy that they were not in the service of the kings as "agents" or officials of the state, as other naharars of high rank were.



the serfs of the "nahapet" were taken into the confines of the fort as a measure for their safety. There were many of these castles, mostly in inaccessible places in the mountains, scattered throughout Armenia.

The naharars also served in the royal court as high officials or "agents." We have seen how Tigranes the Great actually forced the naharars to make their residence in Tigranocerta, the capital city, and to appear in his Court constantly. Most of the naharars, however, lived away from the Court after Tigranes' time, but came occasionally to the king's palace for special conferences or for the performance of their office, or "cordsakaluthiun" (agency). The most important offices of state were hereditary positions given to the heads of senior "nahararuthiuns."

The houses of naharars to whom the honor of holding these high state offices was given, as well as the nature of their position was as follows:

**Knights of Coronation.** The House of Bagratunis were given the privilege of placing the crown upon the head of the king during the coronation ceremonies. The same custom prevailed in Parthia where the Knights of Coronation were closely related to the Arsacid kings with ties of kinship. In Armenia the Bagratunis were related to the reigning dynasty by marriage. The "nahapet" of Bagratunis was called "aspēt" (knight).

**"Mardpetuthiun."** The "Mardpet" (literally chief of men) was in charge of the royal palace and had complete supervision of the treasury and the possessions of the king. He also looked after the forts

and the lines of defense in the royal territory. Although his office had nothing to do with religious matters he is called "Father (Hair) Mardpet". In the fourth century of our era the "mardpets" became very important politically. At that time they seem to have attained the status of a Prime Minister or a Grand Vizier. They also looked after the harem of the king, for Armenian rulers like all eastern potentates were polygamous. The king had a Chief Lady among his many wives who was called the Queen.

**The High Command.** The Armenian army, as we have seen, was composed of the separate armies of the king and of the naharars. There was no standing national army in times of peace. During war times each naharar joined the national forces with his own army and these united armies were placed under the command of the "sparapet" (the Commander-in-Chief). The House of Mamikonians held this highly important position as a hereditary privilege of their noble family.

**Finances.** The man in charge of the finances and public works was called a "Hazarapet." He was the Secretary of the Treasury of the Armenian king who, in addition to supervising the collection of taxes and other incomes of the country, had also charge of those public works which were closely connected with the sources of income, such as irrigation of the land, building of roads etc.

**"Malkhazuthiun."** The "Malkhaz" or "Maghkhaz" was the commander of the Royal Guard. Only those whose loyalty and devotion to the king was proved could serve in this unit which acted as the bodyguard

of the monarch. The "Nahapets" of Horhorunis were the hereditary "Malkhazes" of the Arsacid kings.

There were numerous other less important or minor offices in the Armenian Court. As only the nobility could serve in political or social functions they were filled by naharars or "azats" of every description. Among those officers of the crown we can mention the "senekapet" (chief chamberlain), "orsapet" (chief of game), "ahorapet" (chief of the stables) etc. etc.

#### AZATS AND OSTANIKS

The class of nobility that came after the naharars in the social scale were divided into two different groups—the "azats" and the "ostaniks." As the whole land was in the possession of the king and the naharars, the younger sons of those feudal lords and their descendants became feudaries, that is, they were given smaller domains on condition of service. The "azats" were those petty noblemen who had such feudal holdings in the domains of the naharars, while "ostaniks" were the noblemen of the same category who were given feuds in the royal possessions. The famous cavalry of the Armenian army was made up of these warriors as the mediaeval knights or chevaliers were the petty nobility of Europe.

The word "azat," which means free, was used also in a broader sense to designate the whole aristocracy. Especially in its collective form, "azatani"

it has been used by ancient historians as an all-inclusive designation for the entire nobility.

The "ostaniks" also included the government officials in the employ of the king in his own possessions. Likewise most of the court officials in the royal palace were classed in this category. The "ostaniks" served in the royal army as officers and mounted warriors, known as the "Arkayacan Gund" (Royal Division), forming the nucleus of the national army, while the "azats" were engaged in the same capacity in the private armies of naharars. In times of war each naharar placed his army under the disposal of the king, thus becoming a component part of the national army.

#### THE CLERGY

Religious leaders in Armenia, both in pagan and Christian times, belonged to the aristocratic group. Before the adoption of Christianity religion was the monopoly of a family or a clan, with the status of a "nahararuthiun." The name of this religious clan was Vahuni. Their naharars were the hereditary Chief Priests of pagan Armenia. They owned lands and had serfs working on these lands like the other "nahararuthiuns." With the adoption of Christianity the Vahuni possessions were transferred to the church and its leader, who became the Chief Priest or the Catholicos, with the status of a naharar. In the early stages of the Armenian Church Chief Priesthood was likewise hereditary, and this fact was the cause of

a controversy between the Armenians and other Eastern Christian Churches.

The Armenian clergy, although in the "azat" stratum of society, constituted a unique class by themselves. The Church was decentralized like the government, each province or nahararuthiun having its own religious leader who was a bishop. The Chief Priest resided in the domain of the king and had the same position among the provincial bishops, as the king had among the naharars. The bishops were given the same title "ter" that the naharars had, and they were recognized as the spiritual representatives of the provinces, as the naharars were the political chieftains.

The importance of the Church and the clergy grew in proportion to the land they held. As the Church was constantly given grants of new lands both by the king and the naharars, its political importance grew to alarming proportions. Like the lands of the nobility church possessions too were exempt from taxes. In the course of time the influence of the Church became so strong that both king and naharars were forced to fight against them and even to dispossess them of some of their tenures.

As members of the aristocracy the clergy took part in military affairs too. On the other hand military leaders often entered into priesthood and served as high officials both in churches and in monasteries. The Catholicos Nerses I was a soldier before he took the religious vow. Another Catholicos, Zaven, ordered the clergy to wear military uniforms. There are many instances also wherein we find priests of all ranks

resigning from the service of the church to enter upon a career in the army, and vice versa.

We shall speak in a separate chapter of the great temporal and political power the Catholicos of the Armenians wielded, not only upon the people but upon the nobility as well as upon the king.

### "RAMIK," "SHINAKAN"

The naharars, the "azats," the "ostaniks" and the clergy composed the aristocratic layer of the society in ancient Armenia. They were the privileged classes; they were the warriors, the administrators, the magistrates; they were the judges and the spiritual leaders; they were the free—"azat" classes. In contrast to these there was the other layer, who likewise in a common designation were called the "anazats" (the non-free). All the rest of the population, such as the artisans, the tradesmen, the shopkeepers, the servants and the peasants were in this group, also collectively called the "ramiks," which corresponds to the common people or the masses. The designation "anazat" was given to this group not because they were deprived of liberty or had the status of slaves, but for the sake of contrast to distinguish between the classes that were "free" from taxation and those that bore the whole burden of taxes.

Of these groups the most important as well as the most numerous were the peasants who were called "shinakans." As the economic structure of the country was agricultural, the shinakans were the main

prop of this structure as well as the real producers of wealth. The livelihood of the "azats" depended solely on this class, for in ancient Armenia "the nobility fought, the clergy prayed and the peasants worked."

The king, the naharars, the petty nobility and the church gave the land to the peasant who paid in taxes for the privilege of working it. In addition to the land tax they were required to pay a head tax from the ages of twenty to fifty. The taxes were not low nor exorbitantly high, so that the shinakans could make a fairly good living out of the land. As the land was given them in fief, it remained with the peasant family from generation to generation. The peasants belonged to the land but not to the landlord, who had no right to dispose of them in the way he saw fit. As a matter of fact the shinakans had certain well-established rights as to their family affairs, for holding and even owning property (mostly personal and sometimes real), as well as the right of inheritance. The peasants of ancient Armenia even had the privilege of changing their class by entering the service of the church, but this privilege evidently was not encouraged by the ruling classes. They could marry without the consent of the landlord, who usually did not interfere with their family affairs.

We know little about the exact economic condition of the peasantry. But the laws that have come down to us, promulgated either by the church or the state, indirectly show that the peasants of Armenia were prosperous. This is indicated in the amount of fines imposed upon the shinakans for offences. The rate

of fine for peasants in these laws is one-half the amount imposed upon "azats" for the same offences. These laws show further the social position of the peasants which is much higher in comparison with the position of the serfs in eastern Europe and Russia in the XVII and XVIII centuries. In these latter countries the rate of fine imposed upon serfs was from four to twelve times lower than those of the freemen.

### TOWNSPEOPLE

The common people, who were not engaged upon the soil but lived in cities and towns as artisans and shopkeepers, were likewise classed in the "anazat" group. In addition to these the cities contained a large number of aliens, representing the conglomerate races of the Near East, but mostly Greeks, Jews and Assyrians. These foreign elements, although considerable in number, were in all probability devoid of all political rights and privileges. Most of them had been brought to Armenia by force during the reign of Tigranes and his son Artavazd, and a great number remained in the country even after they were released by the Romans.

Due to lack of documents we know very little about life in the cities. In the works of ancient writers we find a great deal written about the peasants, but there is hardly any mention of the inhabitants of cities and towns. This was not an intentional oversight nor was it due to the unimportance of Armenian cities. It was simply because the townspeople as a social or political factor did not exert any influence

on the affairs of the state. On the other hand we know that such cities as Artaxata and Dwin, especially the latter, became very important world centers of international trade. According to Procopius, the Byzantine historian of the sixth century of our era, the city of Dwin was a great international market where "merchandise was brought from India, from neighboring Georgia, from almost all the peoples of Persia, and from certain Roman possessions, and sold in Dwin." Both of the above cities were situated upon the northern route of international commerce, and served as the meeting place of the East and West. It is interesting to note that this commerce was in the hands of Semitic peoples—Jews and Assyrians—from the time of Tigranes the Great to the period of Arab domination in the sixth century. Armenian merchants got complete control of this trade during the Bagratid rule in Armenia in the tenth century.

Even though there was no difference in the political status of the townspeople and the peasantry, there is ample evidence to show that the latter were at times given some consideration, particularly during national crises. In ancient writings there are several references to the presence of representatives of the peasants in great national conclaves, whereas the name of the townspeople is not even mentioned. Economically, however, the inhabitants of cities must have been better off than the "shinakans." In a later period, during the reign of Bagratid kings, we see the emergence of the townspeople and their attainment of a political status which has similarity to the bourgeoisie of Europe before the French Revolution.

Slaves constituted the lowest class in the ancient Armenian society. Slavery, however, as an economic system did not prevail in Armenia, as it had in ancient Babylonian and Egyptian civilizations, and even as in Hellenic states and in the Roman Empire. As wars of conquest were the chief source of slavery, and the Armenians with one or two exceptions had no kings in pursuit of world conquest, the system could make no headway in Armenia. Nevertheless slaves existed and in all probability they were engaged in domestic service and in public works. Their engagement in agricultural projects on a large scale was never practiced.

#### STRUGGLE BETWEEN KING AND NOBILITY

The feudal system of decentralization in Armenia gradually created a gulf between the royal house and the naharars, bringing disaster to the whole country. Toward the middle of the fourth century of the Christian era the latent enmity of the feudal lords toward the king began to manifest itself in open rebellion. The policy of the kings in anticipation of rebellion had been one of repression. They made attempts to curb the wide powers of the nobility, which further accentuated the resentment of the naharars. Thus a series of internal squabbles, revolts and civil warfare began their periodic recurrences in the country.

These centrifugal tendencies of the naharars were further encouraged both by Romans and Per-

sians. Rome and later Byzantium exerted their influence over the naharars in the western part of the country and made use of them for the furtherance of their own interests, while the eastern naharars became tools in the hands of Persian rulers. Even in times of war against external enemies some naharars would not only revolt against the Armenian king, but actually did join the enemy and fought against their own countrymen.

In extenuation of these seemingly treacherous action of the naharars it must be said that in most cases they were dictated by exigency. Often it was a matter of self-preservation for a naharar to take part in the war on the side of the invader. It must also be remembered that there was no national spirit in those times, in the sense we understand the meaning of that phrase today. Patriotism to a naharar meant the love of his own domain. Furthermore their sympathies were governed by their geographic location. Since the country could not remain neutral in the struggle between Rome and Persia, those nearest to the Persian border would be the first to bear the brunt of Persian invasion. Therefore it was natural for them to advocate a policy of friendliness toward Iran, while those nearest to Roman possessions would oppose it for similar motives. There was also a cultural reason for the division of opinion on foreign policy. Western Armenia was imbued with Greek and Roman culture, while the rest of the country was closely connected with the Iranian civilization. The pro-Persians, therefore, were sincere in their sympathies

as the pro-Romans were. This unfortunate division both on political and cultural lines seems to have been inevitably due to the geographic situation of the country.

The struggle between the king and the nobility, and the growing intensity in the rivalry between Rome and Iran, finally led to the division of the country between the two powerful neighbors in 384 A.D. About four fifths of the country went under Persian domination, but the rule of Arshakunis was permitted for four more decades, when at the request of Armenian naharars the kingdom was abolished and Armenia began to be governed by "Marzpan" (military governors). But the feudal system remained and the naharars were allowed to retain their status as feudal lords. The Persian rule evidently made no changes in the social status of the Armenian people. Not only the local autonomy was preserved but a cultural renaissance of an unusual scope began to flourish only a score or more years after the division of the country. The discovery of the Armenian alphabet and the subsequent "Golden Age" of Armenian literature fall within this period of Persian domination of Armenia. No doubt this cultural prosperity was due to the security of the people against foreign invasions as well as to internal peace. The naharars were satisfied as long as their rights and privileges were recognized by the Sassanian rulers. After the division of the country internecine warfare, which had exhausted them both physically and economically, ceased. The Persians became tolerant and friendly.

The Romans in the west stopped molesting them. So spurred by the newly acquired Christianity and the peacefully penetrating Hellenic culture, they produced an age which is probably the brightest in the annals of the land.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FIRST ARSACIDS

The Rivalry of Rome and Parthia.—Parthian Prince on the Armenian Throne.—The Treaty of Randeia.—Nero Crowns Tiridates in Rome.—Armenian King Entertained by Romans.—Trajan Annexes Armenia.—Partho-Roman Wars for Armenian Succession.—Sassanids Establish Rule over Persia.

As a result of the rivalry between Rome and Parthia the first half century of the Christian era became a black page in the history of Armenia. The civil strife on the one side and the raids of northern tribes and the intermittent expeditions of Parthians and the Romans on the other, had brought the country to the very verge of ruin. The ruthless and wilful reign of Radamizdes, the Georgian, finally converted most of the people to the cause of the nationalist party, who were pro-Parthian in their sympathies, and thus helped to put an end to the chaotic condition of the country.

When in the year 51 A.D. Valarses I ascended the throne of Parthia, the Armenian nationalists made advances to him and actually asked him to take Armenia under his protection. The Iranian ruler being a shrewd statesman accepted the offer and appointed his young brother Tiridates as king of Armenia, and giving him an army sent him to Artaxata. Valarses had his own good reasons for taking this step which he knew would serve to rouse the Romans against

him. His plan was to have both Armenia and Media ruled by kings who were members of his family. If the three kingdoms could thus be brought into closer contact with each other by establishing ties of kinship between their ruling families, then Parthia would have no difficulty in keeping her neighbors under her influence. Both Armenians and Medians gladly subscribed to the plan of Valarses by which they were to become subordinate kingdoms, with wide autonomous privileges, but no foreign policy nor fiscal sovereignty. The Parthian ruler was to be the King of Kings who alone would have the right to coin money for all the three countries. It is for this reason that no coins have been left from the period of Armenian Arsacid Dynasty which lasted from 66 to 428 A.D.

When Tiridates entered Armenia with a Parthian army, Radamizdes fled from the country without even an attempt of resistance. Both Artaxata and Tigranocerta welcomed the new ruler with open arms. But a severe winter and the insufficiency of provisions forced the Parthian army to leave the country. When the news of the evacuation of Armenia reached Radamizdes, he returned to Artaxata with his army and began once more to tyrannize the people. This time the populace revolted and attacked the palace of the brutal king. Radamizdes fearing the vengeance of his embattled subjects fled the country once more.

But Rome could look with no complacency upon the happenings in the East. Especially the passing of Armenia under Parthian influence could not be tolerated by the Roman emperor, the newly enthroned seventeen year old Nero, who at once ordered Corbulo,

the Roman military governor of Cappadocia, to take his legions to Armenia and restore there the influence of Rome. Corbulo marched upon Artaxata, which being left without a defending force, surrendered peacefully. In spite of the non-resistance of the Armenians, however, Corbulo burned the old capital before going south to Tigranocerta, which likewise surrendered to the Romans without any fighting. With this accomplishment Corbulo considered his mission at an end and placed upon the Armenian throne Tigranes VII, a Hebrew prince, whom Nero had selected for that post.

This attitude of the Romans enraged Valarses, who had until then remained neutral. Considering the treatment of his brother by Rome as a direct insult to him, he crowned Tiridates officially as king of Armenia and, giving him an army of considerable size, sent him to reclaim his kingdom, while he himself made preparations to invade Roman territories.

Corbulo being a shrewd soldier quickly grasped the situation and, to escape the fate of Crassus and Antonius, found a good pretext to excuse himself from taking command of the Roman armies. He asked the Emperor for a new commander and Nero appointed one of his friends, a general called Paetus for the task.

Paetus arrived at the fort of Randeia on the Arazani and established there his headquarters. Valarses entered Armenia from the south and marched directly upon Randeia. A Roman contingent was sent to detain the Parthians but they were at once annihilated and Paetus found himself surrounded



by the enemy's huge army. Seeing the futility of any resistance, the Roman commander sued for peace which was granted to him on very humiliating conditions. He was to surrender the strongly fortified and well provisioned Randeia, as well as all the other forts in Armenia, and to take out of the country every Roman soldier.

With the defeat of Paetus the high command of the Roman forces in Asia was once more entrusted to Corbulo. The old general was given special powers to wipe out the disgrace of Randeia and bring Armenia once more under the influence of Rome. After gathering a huge army at Melitine, composed of all the Roman legions in Asia, together with crack regiments from Egypt and the fighting units of subject kings, Corbulo crossed the Euphrates. He had, however, no desire to encounter the Parthians, and began to make efforts to settle the Armenian question through diplomacy. So he sent envoys to Valarses to explain his peaceful intentions. The Parthian king was not adverse to the peaceful method, provided his brother did remain upon the throne of Armenia. The final negotiations took place at Randeia where Corbulo and Tiridates conducted a treaty which became the basis of Roman diplomacy in regards to Armenia for the next three hundred and fifty years. The treaty guaranteed the national autonomy of Armenia and settled the thorny question of succession to the Armenian throne in an ingenuous way. The king of Parthia was to chose an Arsacid prince for the throne of Armenia, and the king-elect was to receive his crown as a gift from the hand of the Roman Emperor.

The treaty also stipulated that Armenia was to remain an ally and a friend of Rome.

### TIRIDATES IN ROME

As Tiridates was already appointed king of Armenia by his brother Valarses, he had to go to Rome to receive his crown from Emperor Nero's hands. Soon after the signing of the treaty Tiridates set forth for the western capital, accompanied by his wife, his sons and the sons of Valarses, together with a retinue of three thousand Armenian and Parthian horsemen, numerous magi and a large group of Roman dignitaries. The procession of Tiridates' entourage throughout Asia Minor was like a triumphal march of a conqueror. He and his followers were entertained and feted in every city through which they passed. According to Roman historians this journey cost Rome about \$30,000 each day.

The welcome accorded the king-elect by the Roman emperor was as warm as it was sumptuous. Nero went to Neapolis to receive his royal visitor personally, as the latter landed upon Italian soil with his entourage. After entertaining his Armenian guests in Neapolis and Puteolis with extravagant festivities, Nero rode with Tiridates into Rome, which was lavishly decorated for the great occasion. The whole population of the vast metropolis had come out to see the handsome king of Armenia entering the Eternal City in company with their own pompous emperor. The procession moved toward the Forum

where Nero, in the presence of Senators and of the Praetorian Guard, placed the crown of Armenia upon the head of Tiridates amid the deafening applause of the huge multitude of white-clad spectators.

The entertainments that followed the coronation of Tiridates were unusually extravagant. By a senatorial resolution great festivities took place in Rome. A dramatic presentation was given in the magnificent Pompeius Theatre which was lavishly decorated with gold by the order of the emperor. In the circus, wearing the costume of Apollo, Nero acted and sang with the accompaniment of guitar, in honor of the new king of Armenia. As an appropriate finale to all these spectacular performances Nero closed the doors of the temple of Janus personally as an indication of peace throughout the Roman world.

In addition to the sumptuous entertainments that the Roman emperor had lavished upon Tiridates he gave the Armenian king one half million sesterces (about \$2,000,000) as a parting gift. Furthermore, he sent a number of Roman architects and craftsmen for the rebuilding of Artaxata which had been destroyed by Corbulo.

### THE ARSACID DYNASTY

Tiridates returned to Armenia in the year 66 A.D. and reigned happily, until his untimely death in 75, over a contented people who had finally found peace.

Thus started the period in Armenian history known as the reign of the Arsacids. The successors of

Tiridates, however, did not find the status of a buffer state so pleasant, as the rivalry between the Romans and the Parthians very frequently brought new disasters to the Armenians and their ruling kings. The Arsacids, who had been the reigning dynasty of Parthia for three hundred years, thus gave to Armenia a branch of their family, who being Armenianized, shared in the tribulations of their adopted country, some becoming very patriotic rulers and others disgraceful scapegoats.

The Armenian Arsacids or Arshakunis, as has already been explained, were not hereditary kings. The right of the family to the throne of Armenia was recognized both by Rome and Parthia, but no individual member of the family could claim the crown as a birthright. Furthermore, this arrangement was bound not only to cause friction between the two powerful signatories of the treaty of Randa, but also to invite ambitious Arsacid princes to resort to intrigues and machinations for attaining the coveted prize. The treaty was bound to cause a great deal of unhappiness and much bloodshed in Armenia.

The first serious friction between Rome and Parthia over the Armenian question came about forty years after the death of Tiridates I. The immediate successor of the first Arsacid king was Sanatruk, who being elevated to the throne in accordance with the Treaty of Succession, reigned peacefully until 110 A. D. After his death Bacur I of Parthia appointed his own son, Ashkhadar, to the throne of Armenia with the consent of emperor Trajan of Rome. But Ashkhadar failed to please either country, so when

two years later Chosroes II became king of Parthia, he deposed Ashkhadar and placed upon the throne of Armenia another Arsacid prince, called Parthamasir, without however first obtaining the consent of Trajan. This lack of tact eventually led to war. For Trajan, at the very height of his glory, could not overlook this slight by the Parthian ruler. Having brought Rome to the zenith of its power, Trajan would not tolerate the high-handedness of Chosroes, so he himself decided to take the field and crush the Parthian power.

#### TRAJAN ANNEXES ARMENIA

Trajan left Rome with this determination. When he arrived in Athens a Parthian delegation presented itself to him to ask for his confirmation of Parthamasir. But the Emperor haughtily refused their request, and continued his journey to Syria. Making Antioch his headquarters, he set out with his legions and crossing the Euphrates arrived in Armenia. Parthamasir presented himself to Trajan as a gesture of peace and friendliness, and placed his crown before the feet of the Roman asking for his confirmation. The Emperor curtly answered that he had decided henceforth to rule over Armenia through Roman governors. The Arsacid prince, mortified by the humiliating attitude of Trajan, angrily left the imperial presence, but was arrested and brought back. Indignantly but vainly he protested to Trajan against this breach of diplomatic etiquet, as he had come

peacefully and of his own accord to ask for his confirmation. Trajan ordered him to leave Armenia immediately with his retinue, and arranged for a Roman contingent to accompany the pretender to the Armenian throne as far as the Parthian frontier. On his way to exile Parthamasir made an attempt to escape, but he was overtaken and finally was put to death by the order of the Emperor.

Trajan proclaimed Armenia as a Roman province and appointed a Roman as viceroy to govern the country.

But Armenia did not long remain as a Roman province nor did Trajan have occasion to celebrate his victories by erecting new triumphal arches in Rome. His despicable treatment of the unfortunate king of Armenia and his high-handed management of diplomatic affairs in Asia aroused all the peoples on the eastern frontiers of the Roman Empire, who rose in violent revolt against Rome and slaughtered or routed the legions of Trajan garrisoned in these countries. Armenia was among the first to rise against Roman rule, under the leadership of prince Valarses, a son of king Sanatruk. Trajan was still in the East when the rebellion broke out but being old and sick he could take no measures to stop the crumbling of Roman rule at the distant frontiers. He soon died in the city of Traianopolis in Cilicia in the year 116.

His successor Adrian followed a policy of conciliation, for he was convinced that to keep Armenia as a Roman province entailed a huge expense to Rome, without appropriate returns. So he made peace

with Parthia by giving back the lands conquered by Trajan and recalled the viceroy of Armenia.

### QUARRELS OVER ARMENIA

Valarses was appointed and confirmed as king of Armenia and he reigned over the country from 116 to 140 A.D. Having brought peace to the people, he devoted his time to constructive activities and built a new city which he named Valarshapat (the modern Vagharshabad where Echmiadsin is).

With the death of Adrian, however, the peace of Armenia was again jeopardized. Antonius Pius, the new emperor of Rome took a hostile attitude toward Valarses and finally deposed the good king, replacing him with Soiemus, a prince from Syria whose mother was an Arsacid. The Parthians were by no means pleased by this arrangement and some years later, during the first year of the reign of the new emperor Marcus Aurelianus, Valarses III of Parthia sent his army into Armenia, put Soiemus to flight and placed Bacur, a brother of former king Valarses, upon the throne of Armenia.

The viceroy of Cappadocia was entrusted by Rome with the mission of nullifying this new arrangement made by Parthia. But the mission was not carried out, for when the Roman commander marched upon Armenia with his legions, both he and his army were destroyed by the Armeno-Parthian forces.

This incident caused another war between Rome and Parthia. Aurelianus sent his co-ruler Verus to conduct the war, which ended by the defeat of the

Parthians. Former king Soiemus was brought back by the Romans and re-established upon his throne (164 A.D.). The nationalist party of Armenia resisted the high-handedness of Verus and the leader of this party, an Armenian nobleman called Tiridates, even had the audacity to draw his sword against the Roman emperor. The life of Tiridates was spared for this insolence, but he was exiled to far away Britain and Soiemus continued his reign over Armenia.

The name of the king who succeeded Soiemus is not known, but it seems certain that he had won the confidence of both Rome and Parthia, for the country remained in peace until Caracalla, becoming emperor of Rome, wanted to revive the aggressive policy of Trajan toward the eastern countries. After making extensive preparations for a campaign in the East, Caracalla went to Antioch and invited the king of Armenia to his palace under a friendly pretext. The unsuspecting king, as well as his queen and children, were put in chains and dispatched to Rome.

The perfidy perpetrated by Caracalla roused once more the Armenian nation. Tiridates, the son of the captive king, became the leader of the rebellion against Roman rule. To suppress the revolt Caracalla sent a large army which was defeated by the rebels. Whereupon the emperor himself marched against Tiridates with all his forces. The Armenian king, realizing the inadequacy of his forces, took refuge in the Parthian court and asked the aid of his cousin for the protection of his throne. Caracalla demanded the delivery of Tiridates to him, threatening to invade Parthia in case of refusal. As the king of Parthia was

not ready for war he gave up Tiridates to the Romans.

Caracalla left Armenia after raiding several provinces and marched into Mesopotamia in pursuit of further adventures. He was preparing to invade Parthia when he was finally killed by his own soldiers for the horrible brutalities which he had perpetrated on everybody, without discrimination. Macrinus Caesar, his successor, carried out his plan for war with Parthia, which ended with the defeat of the Romans. As a condition of the peace treaty Tiridates II was released and restored to the throne of Armenia. Besides his crown, emperor Macrinus sent to the king of Armenia his mother and his brothers, who were being held in Rome as captives.

#### THE SASSANIDS OF PERSIA

A major calamity, as far as the future of the Armenian race was concerned, was being prepared not in Rome but in the east. It was in the neighboring kingdom of Parthia that future hostilities toward Armenia were being engendered. It originated with the introduction of a new dynasty which defeated and supplanted the Arsacid kings of Parthia, who had been so closely related to the Armenians with ties of friendship as well as of kinship.

This change came about through the efforts of a Persian prince by the name of Artashir, who claimed to be a descendant of Achaemenian kings. Revolting against the rule of the Parthian Arsacids, Artashir organized a strong opposition and after three bloody battles he defeated and annihilated the army of

Artabanus V, the last king of the Arsacids. Artabanus himself fell in the battle and the supremacy of Artashir, the son of Babak the son of Sassan, remained unchallenged. Having thus mastered the whole Parthian Empire he proclaimed himself "King of Kings" and became in the year 226 A.D. the founder of a new dynasty called Sassanid or Sassanian after the name of his grandfather. Nor was the vanity of Artashir satisfied with his domination of the entire Iranian Plateau. His ambition was to revive the Achaemenian empire which had at one time embraced the whole of Asia Minor, as well as Armenia. Rome was considered by this ambitious ruler as an interloper who had to be expelled from Asiatic soil, which he regarded as his lawful heritage. And woe to him who would stand between him and the realization of his ambitions!

Chosroes I, the successor and brother of Tiridates II, had made an effort to go to the aid of his kinsman, the ruler of Parthia. He was on his way to Persia with his army when the news of King Artabanus' tragic end had reached him. Returning to his capital Chosroes invited all the members of the Arsacid clan for a conference. Only the sons of Artabanus and their sympathizers, and the Median branch of the family, responded to the call of the Armenian king. Other Arsacid princes had already espoused the cause of Artashir, the usurper, who had promised them important positions and high honors. In this reunion of loyal Arsacids it was decided to carry on the war against Artashir and work for the restoration of the old dynasty. Chosroes was recognized as the leader of the great royal house, as with

the death of Artabanus, he had become the most important Arsacid prince.

The struggle that ensued was only the beginning of a long series of wars between the two hitherto friendly nations, who were to become implacable foes for centuries to come. At the first stage of the struggle fortune seemed to favor the Armenians and the cause of Arsacids as against the Persians and the supremacy of the Sassanians. Chosroes with the aid of fierce tribes from the Caucasus, whom he had allured by the promise of looting, dealt a crushing defeat to the forces of Artashir and himself returned to Valarshapat with countless booty. He undertook a second campaign against the Persians in the following year, and this time he had Roman legions fighting on his side. The struggle went on for ten years, but neither side was able to win a decisive victory. For at the end of that period the Arsacids of Parthia were not restored to their throne nor Artashir had succeeded in expelling the Arsacids from Armenia, which was his avowed purpose.

#### CHOSROES ASSASSINATED

What Artashir failed to do through arms his son Shapuh succeeded in doing through treachery. He offered a secondary throne to that member of the Parthian Arsacid family who would remove Chosroes from the path of the Sassanians. Anak, a prince of the Pahlavi branch of the family, accepted the offer of the King of Kings and having gained the confidence of the king of Armenia, assassinated him in Valar-

shapat. The last wish of the dying king being the punishment of the assassin, before his death he ordered the ruthless extermination of the plotters against his life, together with all the members of their families. Soon after his death Anak and his fellow-conspirators were hurled down from the bridge of Tabera near the city of Artaxata.

But the harm was done and Shabuh, taking advantage of the confusion created by the assassination of his able adversary, marched upon Armenia with his army and put to flight the Roman legions. The only surviving heir of Chosroes, the child Tiridates, had already been proclaimed king and placed under the care of Artavazd Mamikonian as regent. Before the arrival of Shapuh, however, the regent succeeded in sending the child king to Rome to save his life. The Persian ruler thus treacherously taking possession of Armenia reduced her into a satrapy in 252 A.D.

For twenty-five years Armenia remained under Persian domination. During this period Rome fought several times to recover the country, but it was not until the reign of Diocletian (284-305) that Romans finally succeeded in taking Armenia away from the Persians by diplomatic efforts.

Having brought Armenia once more under Roman influence, Diocletian appointed Tiridates, the son of Chosroes I, as king of Armenia, and after crowning him with great pomp and festivities in Rome he sent him home with Roman legions to reclaim his patrimony.

## CHAPTER X

### INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY

Tiridates III and his Wars with Persia.—Saint Gregory the Illuminator.—The Martyr Virgins.—Armenia Proclaims Christianity as the State Religion.—Chosroes II.—Tiran.

The reign of Tiridates III (287-337 A.D.) has become memorable especially because of his conversion to Christianity. Probably he was not the first king who embraced the religion of the Nazarene, but Armenia, during his reign, was the first country that adopted Christianity as the state religion, thus becoming a pioneer country for the spread of Christianity.

Nor was this the only major accomplishment of Tiridates. Being brought up in Rome, where he was sent in his childhood to be spared a tragic end at the hand of the Persian king, he had received an occidental education, and what proved to be still more helpful, he knew the psychology of the Roman rulers better than any oriental prince. His skill in the art of war, his shrewdness in the diplomatic game, his proficiency in tact, coupled with his great intelligence and high erudition made of him a great statesman.

When young Tiridates returned to his native country with a powerful Roman army, he was given a touching and glorious reception. Here was the child who twenty-five years earlier had been spirited away from his father's kingdom by the loyal regent, lest

he too meet the same tragic fate as his royal parent. Now having grown into magnificent manhood, handsome, strong, capable, he was returning as a liberator of his subjects, bringing with him the promise and hope of a future which was to be peaceful, prosperous and pleasant. The peerage of the land together with the heads of the noble families, as well as the priests, the freemen and the common people received him with genuine feeling. Among them was also his own sister Chosroeducht, the royal princess.

Bahram II of Persia, who had negotiated with Diocletian for the return of Armenia to the Roman zone of influence, recognized the new king. But Tiridates remained implacable and began to war against the Persians for the recovery of those Armenian territories which were still under Iranian domination. With the help of Emperor Diocletian, his friend and benefactor, he succeeded in humiliating the Sassanian king and taking back the lost provinces.

### WAR WITH PERSIA

But Persia was too mighty to remain cowed by Tiridates, who was after all only a tool of Roman diplomacy. So when Nerseh came upon the Sassanian throne he adopted the policy of Shapuh and began to make extensive preparations to drive the Romans out of Asia. He initiated his ambitious plans by the invasion and domination of Armenia in the year 296. Diocletian sent Galerius Maximianus Caesar against the Persians, but he was defeated in Mesopotamia and returned to Rome to face a cold reception from

Diocletian. The Romans, however, would not acknowledge defeat and this time the best legions of the Caesars were entrusted with the task of fighting a decisive battle for the fate of Roman possessions and Roman prestige in Asia. Once more Galerius Caesar crossed the Euphrates with the famous Danubian army and a contingent of Goths. This time the Roman Emperor changed his route and instead of exposing his army to the hazards of the Mesopotamian plain he marched through Armenia, whose inhabitants were friendly. Tiridates joined the Roman legions with his own contingent and rendered valuable service to them. The Persian army was destroyed in Armenia and the ambitious Sassanian king barely saved his life by flight, leaving into the hands of his enemies not only a vast amount of war materials, but also his harem, his sisters, many court dignitaries and his personal treasure.

This terrible defeat might have been the death blow to the Sassanian dynasty had the Roman emperors decided to see the fight to its logical conclusion. Diocletian, however, had no desire to further extend the already far-flung frontiers of the Roman Empire, so when Nerseh sent his envoys to sue for peace without conditions, he readily granted the request of the Persian king and a peace treaty was signed in the city of Nisibin.

By the Treaty of Nisibin the river Tigris became the boundary between the two empires. The Armenian provinces of Sophene, Cordyene, Alznick and Angelton and the Mesopotamian province of Zavdeck were put under the suzerainty of Armenia, to be governed by

local princes and to be considered as Roman satrapies. Armenia was further compensated by receiving other territories in the east, with Armenian populations. Tiridates was restored to his throne in recognition of the important role he had played in the Perso-Roman wars. During the remainder of his reign, which lasted for another forty years, Tiridates was not molested by the Persians, and Armenia enjoyed a period of peace and happiness under her wise and constructive king.

But to Tiridates fate had reserved another role upon which was to rest his everlasting reputation. This was the adoption of Christianity, which according to Armenian sources came about in a miraculous way. The story of the conversion of Tiridates by Saint Gregory may be challenged for its unquestioned credence in the supernatural, but in its entirety it is interesting and suggestive.

#### SAINT GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR

As soon as Tiridates had made his throne secure by the Treaty of Nisibin he turned his attention to internal affairs. Being brought up in Rome his whole outlook on life was occidental, while the country in general was under strong Persian cultural influence. Especially the Armenian religion, which had been Hellenized under the reigns of Artaxias and Tigranes, had now almost given way to Iranian fire worship. Tiridates' first concern was to revive the old national paganism which was more in conformity with his western ideas than the Persian form of worship.



So the king proclaimed the revival of the national religion by an edict, commanding all his subjects to return to the old form of worship and threatening with punishment all those who disobeyed the royal edict. The revival, like all religious revivals, worked itself into a frenzy. The old gods regained once more their old popularity. The king himself set the example by offering sacrifices in the great Vahevahian Temple to the beloved triad of ancient Armenia, Vahagn, Anahit and Astlik. During the religious ceremonies in Ashtishat, however, the king noticed that one of his own followers, a young man who had joined him during his sojourn in Rome, was watching the rites with indifference. When exhorted to join in the worship, he refused point blank and openly declared himself to be a Christian, to the horror of all present. Tiridates was enraged and ordered the man to be punished by unspeakable tortures. Upon further investigation it was found that he was Gregory, a son of the regicide Anak, the Parthian, who had assassinated king Chosroes at the instigation of Sassanian Artashir. The reason why Gregory was not put to death immediately was because Tiridates wanted to punish the son of his father's assassin by some penalty worse than death. Anak's son was ordered to solitary confinement in a subterranean cell in the dungeon at the castle of Artaxata.

### THE MYTH OF THE VIRGINS

The incident is forgotten until some years later a group of Christian maidens from Rome, escaping

from the persecution of emperor Diocletian, take refuge in Armenia and make their residence in the environs of Valarshapat, the capital. Among the refugees there is a young woman of great beauty, by name of Rhipsime, whose exceptional comeliness is finally brought to the attention of Tiridates. The Armenian king takes a fancy to her as soon as she is brought to his presence. The Christian maiden resists the advances of the sensuous monarch and after struggling in his embrace succeeds in fleeing from the palace. The humiliation caused by his failure enrages Tiridates and he immediately orders her execution. The king's henchmen go to the house where the maidens are living, take Rhipsime, Gaiane, the leader, and several others from their prayer meeting and cut them into pieces.

The martyrdom of the virgins, however, reacts upon king Tiridates. He is haunted by their spirits and becomes unhappy and morose. To forget the incident he decides to go hunting. On his way to the hunting grounds he is seized by insanity and rolling out of his chariot he is transformed into a pig. Like the Biblical legend of Nebuchadnezzar he lives in the company of pigs to the great grief of his followers. And while the royal court remains helpless before this supernatural event, Chosroeducht, the sister of Tiridates, for five consecutive times has a vision about the solitary prisoner in the dungeon. It is revealed to her that he alone can cure the demented and transformed king. Gregory is finally brought out and he succeeds in restoring the king to his normal self.

## ADOPTION OF CHRISTIANITY

The man who cured king Tiridates of this strange malady became Saint Gregory the Illuminator. Having gained the confidence of the king he went to Caesaria to be ordained as Catholicos of the Armenians. Upon his return to Armenia he decided to uproot the old pagan religion and replace it with the Christian Faith. Without losing time he started upon his mission of destroying the old order as soon as he set foot upon Armenian soil. First he visited Ashtishat, the sacred city of pagan Armenia, and attacked the famous Vahevahian Temple with his mob of religious zealots. The priests of Vahagn, Anahit and Astlik, the triad to whom the great temple was dedicated, fought valiantly but were finally vanquished. The pagan house of worship was demolished and upon its site a church of Christ was erected by St. Gregory. Nor was the new Catholicos satisfied with this exploit alone but continued his vandalistic activities until he had destroyed all the temples of paganism and with them irreplaceable treasures of pagan culture.

King Tiridates and the members of the royal family, together with many naharars, were baptized by St. Gregory in the city of Bagavan. Immediately thereafter the king by a proclamation announced the adoption of Christianity as the official state religion of Armenia. This was followed by a royal decree which granted to the new church the properties of the pagan temples. St. Gregory himself personally shared in the royal munificence, as he was endowed with lands that had belonged to the House of Vahunis, the hereditary Chief Priests of pagan Armenia. Thus not only the

newly founded Christian Church but the "House of the Illuminator" became important factors in the social and political life of Armenia.

Both St. Gregory and king Tiridates lived into ripe old age. During their lifetime Armenia enjoyed peace and prosperity. The people, who accepted the new religion not by conviction but as something imposed upon them from above, became gradually accustomed to Christianity, not however without grafting into it some of their pagan traditions and festivities. The Illuminator died in the year 325, after a reign of twenty years as spiritual head of the country, and was buried in the town of Thordan, one of his numerous possessions. King Tiridates lived a decade or so longer and died near the age of ninety in 337.

The adoption of Christianity accentuated further the great dilemma of the Armenian people in their choice for political preference between Christian West and pagan East. The Church and the House of the Illuminator became the chief protagonists of friendship for Rome, little suspecting that Roman or Byzantine emperors, even though their co-religionists, would betray them without a qualm and leave them at the mercy of Persian kings in the most crucial moments of their history. St. Gregory and King Tiridates could not foresee that these same Christian brothers of the west would fail to succor the Armenian race even in the enlightened twentieth century when it was being exterminated by an eastern power for its loyalty to western peoples and western ideals.

The perfidy of western Christianity has been demonstrated time and again throughout the annals

of that great religion. The best illustration of this base treachery is to be found in a letter written in the year 590 by emperor Maurice of the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire to king Chosroes II of Persia. Here is an excerpt from that letter which could have been written in the twentieth century by the most Christian Czar of all Russias to the Ottoman Sultan:

"The Armenians are a cunning and intolerable race," wrote Maurice. "They live between us and are a nuisance to both of us. Now I intend to send mine (Armenian subjects) to Thrace as soldiers. Do the same with yours, sending them eastwards. If they perish, it will be our enemies who die; but if they kill others, it will be our enemies they will slay. As for ourselves we can then have mutual peace. But as long as they are left alive in their own land there is no repose for either of us."

It is amazing how the race has survived all those treacherous ambushes. Whether this was done through or in spite of Christianity is immaterial. The important thing is the fact of its survival. The vitality of the Armenian race is indeed miraculous!

## CHOSROES II

The immediate successors of Tiridates III, both his son Chosroes II and his grandson Tiran, showed none of the traits that had made of the first Christian king a great ruler. No sooner had Chosroes ascended the throne of his father a religious rebellion broke

out. It was an attempt by the pagan priests to restore the old religion, being backed mostly by Armenian women who had remained faithful to the old order. It is said that the queen herself was the instigator of a plot to assassinate Catholicos Vrtanes, son and successor of St. Gregory, in the city of Ashtishat. As soon as the religious revolt was suppressed a political uprising engaged the attention of the king. This was the beginning of the unrest among the naharars and Chosroes dealt with it ruthlessly by completely exterminating the Orduni and Manavazuni clans.

But the real trouble for Chosroes and his successors was only beginning. For once more the figure of a great king was rising upon the eastern horizon. This was Shapuh or Shapur II of Persia, who was crowned before his birth and who became one of the greatest rulers of the Sassanian dynasty. During his unusually long reign he was the contemporary of six Armenian kings and ten Roman emperors, and he fought with almost all of them. His first hostile act against Armenia started with his inciting the pro-Persian or the pagan party into rebellion against Chosroes. The rebellion was successful and the Armenian king was forced to flee into Roman territory with the pro-Roman or Christian naharars. By this time Constantine the Great had divided the Roman Empire among his three sons, giving the eastern portion to Constantius. This was later to be known as the Eastern Roman or the Greek or more commonly the Byzantine Empire, with its capital in the ancient Greek city of Byzantium, which Constantine had rebuilt and renamed Constantinople after himself.

As Armenia had already become a factor of prime importance to the Roman Empire the situation created by the flight of Chosroes could not remain unheeded. Constantius hurried to the eastern frontier to deal with the Persian menace personally. He found the Roman legions weak and mutinous, but his presence in the East was sufficient for the pro-Roman faction in Armenia to gain the upper hand and restore the king to his throne.

#### TIRAN

The reign of Chosroes was cut short by his death and he was succeeded by his son Tiranus or Tiran, who received his crown from the hand of Constantius. From the very beginning Tiran saw that the best policy he could follow was that of strict neutrality between the two empires that were trying to bring Armenia under their influence. But circumstances finally forced him to cast his lot with the Romans. This step alienated the pro-Persian faction who, at the instigation of Shapur, began to plot the downfall of the Armenian king. It was the beginning of the great dilemma of the Armenian rulers of this period. External forces, which were beyond their control, actually forced them to take sides in the great struggle that was going on between Rome and Persia for the domination of Mesopotamia and Armenia. If the king sided with the Romans he would, in addition to the enmity of Persia, incur the displeasure of the naharars who were in favor of a Persian orientation

in the foreign policy of Armenia. If he followed a pro-Persian policy, the Roman Empire, the leaders of the Armenian Church and the advocates of the western orientation would plot for his overthrow. These kings found themselves in the proverbial situation of being between the devil and the deep sea, and no matter what their choice was they were doomed to failure and misfortune in the end.

Tiran and his successors saw that the chief cause of their misfortunes were the naharars. To their way of thinking the weakness of Armenia was a direct cause of the political set-up of the country—the absence of a strong centralized government. If they could only curb the powers of the naharars and make them subservient to themselves then they could cope with the external enemies through the united efforts of a united people.

Chosroes II was probably forced to fight against the naharars. With Tiran it became a fixed policy to curb the power of the feudal lords of his realm. The policy of repression was bound to have far-reaching consequences. It led to further revolts which were dealt with inexorably and brutally. Even mighty families such as Ardsrunis and Rshtunis were not spared. Tiran ordered the complete extermination of these two houses and the confiscation of their possessions. Both of these would have been extinct had it not been for two noblemen of Mamikonian family, who even though loyal to the king, saved one male child from each family and brought them up in their own castles, later marrying them into their own family. The man who was entrusted with the mis-

sion of suppressing the naharars was the "Mardpet," who became a dreaded and hateful figure to the nobility. Even the Mamikonians, the most loyal of the naharars, withdrew from active service to Tiran, and although they did not openly espouse the cause of the rebels they retired into their castles as an indication of their dissatisfaction.

Shapur did not fail to take advantage of the new situation. Through intrigues he finally succeeded in having Tiran and his family brought to Ctesiphon, his capital, as captives. The King of Kings treated the Armenian ruler brutally and having blinded the helpless monarch imprisoned him and his family in a castle. The cruel treatment of Tiran at the hands of Shapur, however, once more aroused the Armenians, who made strong appeals to Constantius to avenge the iniquity visited upon their king. The Roman emperor responded to the appeal and as a result a new war with Persia ensued. The Persian army was defeated and Shapur sued for peace. As a diplomatic gesture to win the sympathy of the Armenians he himself crowned Arsaces, the son of Tiran, as king of Armenia, and sent him back to his country, together with the prisoners of war he had taken in Armenia and many valuable gifts.

## CHAPTER XI

### ARSACES II

The Problems of Arsaces.—Intrigues and Plots.—Arshakavan.—  
A Sample of Diplomatic Correspondence.—War Between Persia  
Pharrantzem and Her Tragic End.

When Arsaces or Arshak became king of Armenia he found the country in a state of disintegration. Both the foreign invasions and the internal strife had brought the land to the very brink of economic ruin. A state of anarchy prevailed throughout the kingdom as a result of the strong measures applied by Tiran against the unruly naharars. The authority and prestige of the sovereign had dwindled to almost zero, while the power and influence of the Catholicos had increased to an alarming degree.

#### THE PROBLEMS OF ARSACES

To be king of Armenia under these circumstances required not only exceptional ability and wisdom, but foresight, courage and determination to an unusual degree. The task before him was of such magnitude that even the contemplation of its insurmountable difficulties would have discouraged many a strong person. The king was expected to bring economic recovery, to establish law and order, to reconcile the clashing interests of two powerful neighbors, both of

them having special designs on the country; he was expected to placate the embattled nobility, to deal gently but with determination with the growing power of the Church; he was furthermore expected to have enough will power and tenacity to carry out all these plans without breaking down under the strain. And in coping with all these complicated problems the king must have had such sound judgment that no pretext could be provided for new troubles. In short what Armenia needed at this time was not only a king of great ability, but a superman.

Arsaces came near being that superman. The turbulent reign of this king, with his valiant fight against tremendous odds, his high courage in face of danger, his undaunted perseverance in times of greatest despondency, and the original remedies he tried to apply for the solution of some of his problems, stand out as a monument to the unfortunate ruler, whom fate had foredoomed to failure. His stormy career and his tragic death give color to the age he lived in. And if he failed to save the country from impending disaster, as he did, he cannot be accused of being a silent or indifferent accessory to the crime.

Arshak's first concern was the economic rehabilitation of Armenia. The first few years of his reign were devoted to this purpose with excellent results. At the same time, having made peace with the nobility, he had put an end to the chaotic condition prevailing in the country. Most of the naharars were recalled to the Court and reinstated in their old offices. Likewise the leadership of the Church was restored to the House of the Illuminator by placing St. Nerses,

the great-great-grandson of St. Gregory and a second cousin of king Arsaces, upon the religious throne of Armenia. The foreign policy of the king met with the same success as his internal plans. He kept on friendly terms both with Constantinople and with Ctesiphon. The Roman emperor honored him with a bride by sending him Olympia, a young woman of high birth, who had been formerly betrothed to his own brother, before the death of the imperial prince. Shapur too did everything to win the friendship of the Armenian king. He invited Arshak to his Court and entertained him lavishly.

An anecdote illustrates well the efforts of Shapur to win the goodwill of the Armenians. When Arsaces was visiting the King of Kings he one day entered the royal stable. The Chief Stablemaster, a high dignitary of the Persian Court, not only failed to rise and show the royal visitor to a seat, but he even remarked disdainfully in Persian: "King of goats, go and seat upon that haystack!" Vasak Mamikonian, who was accompanying the king, could not tolerate the insult to his master, and drawing his sword cut off the head of the insolent Persian courtier there and then. When Shapur heard of the incident he not only praised the Armenian General for his display of respect for his king, but actually honored him for his chivalrous deed.

### THE INTRIGUES OF THE NAHARARS

Arsaces, however, knew well that these successes were superficial, that the root of the evil was not

extracted, and that sooner or later his plans would meet the obstacles which were inherent in the social and political system of the country. The naharars could not be expected to have changed their political views, and Arshak knew that they were secretly plotting against their king and the welfare of the country. The historian Phaustus, admittedly biased against the king in favor of the Church and the Mamikonians, puts the blame for the rekindling of civil strife upon Arsaces. Thus the murder of Tirith, a nephew of the king, is made to appear as a base design of Arshak for the possession of Pharrantzem, the wife of the murdered prince, while in actuality it might have been for treason, as hinted by the same author.

The intrigues of the nobility finally forced the hand of Arsaces to pursue openly the policy of elimination of the feudal system. Any sign of treason or revolt on the part of a naharar was at once punished not only by the execution of the family's "nahapet," but by the extermination of all the members of the naharar's house, and the confiscation of his possessions by the crown. Even close relatives of Arsaces, such as the Kamsarakans, were not spared the royal wrath. It was in the domains of the last named family that Arsaces built the fortified town of Artogerassa, a great fortress that was to serve a double purpose: a reminder to the nobility of the intent and power of the king, and a measure of defence against foreign invasions.

The disaffection of the naharars or the open break between him and the Catholicos did not deter

Arsaces in his program. With the aid of two of his most loyal followers, the "Mardpet" who had become the most powerful person next to the king, and Vasak Mamikonian, the Commander-in-Chief, king Arshak appeared to be well on his way toward the realization of his radical plan. The aristocracy, even though cowed, were far from being submissive, and as no privileged class ever gave up its prerogatives without a fierce struggle, they continued to prepare for the great contest. Shapur of Persia, who was watching the Armenian experiment with displeasure, was aiding the naharars covertly for reasons of his own.

#### ARSHAKAVAN

Meanwhile Arshak was preparing his master stroke, which if successful, would have given the decisive blow to the feudal system and created a new social and political order for the country. It was an original and revolutionary plan, different from any that had been attempted before. Not only it aimed at the elimination of the feudal system, but had provisions for supplanting it with a bourgeois order, probably on similar lines as prevailed in Europe some thirteen centuries later. The plan consisted in building a new city.

Probably Arshak's greatest contribution to history is his conception of building this city, which was to become a haven for all persecuted and unprivileged individuals. Whoever took refuge in this city would automatically become a freeman and safe from persecution or molestation by any nobleman. We do not

know what the new social order would have been in the new city, but there is every reason to believe that Arshak had planned every detail of his novel idea beforehand. But through haste or through treachery, or possibly both, something went wrong and the dream of the Armenian king was shattered before it was completely realized.

The city of Arsaces' dream was actually built. It was called Arshakavan, which means the city of Arshak. According to ancient Armenian historians, who wrote in a spirit of partisanship, Arshak invited murderers, robbers, scoundrels and criminals of every description to take their residence there and thus escape justice. From their writings, however, it is apparent that the majority of the inhabitants were slaves and serfs of the nobility, who accepted the tendered invitation to become free. Furthermore it is stated that the city grew prodigiously, as people from every part of the country flocked there.

No doubt Arshak had many plans for the city, and the immediate effects of Arshakavan were gratifying. The man power of the naharars was being dwindled in the same proportion that the inhabitants of the king's city were increasing. And when we consider the character of the men who took refuge in this royal asylum, we can understand the trepidation of the nobility and their urgent pleading with the king for the immediate disbanding of the refugees. For the naharars realized that if the city grew at the same rate, within a few years Arshak would have man power for an army immeasurably stronger than the combined forces of the nobility.

Armenian historians recount the destruction of Arshakavan by the naharars, but fail to give details of its fall. The famous city was stormed by the provincial soldiers and all the inhabitants, with the exception of infants only, were put through the sword. "Because," explains Moses of Khorene, "each one (of the naharars) was embittered by his serfs and slaves." It is probable that the destruction of Arshakavan was accomplished by foul play without the knowledge of the king.

#### DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE

While Arsaces was trying to strengthen his throne and was making preparations against foreign enemies, a new war between Shapur and Constantine was brewing, the direct cause of which was the domination of Armenia. The war came in the wake of a letter the Persian king wrote the Roman emperor demanding the return of Armenia and Mesopotamia to his rule. The letter of Shapur and the answer of the Roman emperor, which have been preserved, shed light upon the quarrel. As diplomatic correspondence of those days they are interesting and are herewith produced in their entirety:

"I Sapor, King of Kings, partner of the stars, brother of the sun and moon, to Constantine Caesar my brother send much greeting. I am glad and am well pleased that at last thou hast returned to the right way, and hast acknowledged the incorruptible decree of equity, having gained experience by facts,



and having learnt what disasters an obstinate covetousness of the property of others has often caused.

"Because therefore the language of truth ought to be unrestrained and free, and because men in the highest rank ought only to say what they mean, I will reduce my propositions into a few words; remembering that I have already often repeated what I am now about to say.

"Even your own ancient records bear witness that my ancestors possessed all the country up to the Strymon and the frontier of Macedonia. And these lands it is fitting that I who (not to speak arrogantly) am superior to those ancient kings in magnificence, and in all eminent virtues, should now reclaim. But I am at all times thoughtful to remember that, from my earliest youth, I have never done anything to repent of.

"And therefore it is a duty in me to recover Armenia and Mesopotamia, which were wrested from my ancestor by deliberate treachery. The principle was never admitted by us which you with exultation assert, that all successes in war deserve praise, without considering whether they were achieved by valour or by treachery.

"Lastly, if you are willing to be guided by one who gives you good advice, I would bid you dispise a small part of your dominions which is ever the parent of sorrow and bloodshed, in order to reign in safety over the rest. Wisely considering that physicians also sometimes apply cauterie or amputation, and cut off portions of the body that the patient may have good use of the rest of his limbs. Nay, that even beasts do the same: since when they observe

on what account they are most especially hunted, they will of their own accord deprive themselves of that, in order henceforth to be able to live in security.

"This, in short, I declare, that should my present embassy return without having succeeded in its object, after giving the winter season to rest I will gird myself up with all my strength, and while fortune and justice give me a well-founded hope of ultimate success, I will hasten my march as much as Providence will permit."

To which Constantine answered, "with upright and wise heart," as follows:

"Constantine, always august, conqueror by land and sea, to my brother Sapor much health. I congratulate thee on thy safety, as one who is willing to be a friend to thee if thou wilt. But I greatly blame thy insatiable covetousness, now more grasping than ever.

"Thou demandest Mesopotamia as thine own, and then Armenia. And thou biddest me cut off some members from my sound body in order to place its health on a sound footing: a demand which is to be rejected at once rather than to be encouraged by any consent. Receive therefore the truth, not covered with any pretences, but clear, and not to be shaken by any threats.

"The prefect of my praetorian guard, thinking to undertake an affair which might be beneficial to the State, without my knowledge discoursed about peace with thy generals, by the agency of some low persons. Peace we should neither regret nor refuse—let it only

come with credit and honor, in such a way as to impair neither our self-respect nor our dignity.

"For it would be an unbecoming and shameful thing when all men's ears are filled with our exploits, so as to have shut even the mouth of envy; when after the destruction of tyrants the whole Roman world obeys us, to give up those territories which even when limited to the narrow boundaries of the east we preserved undiminished.

"But I pray thee make an end of the threats which thou utterest against me, in obedience to thy national habit, when it cannot be doubted that it is not from inactivity, but from moderation, that we have at times endured attacks instead of being the assailants ourselves: and know that, whenever we are attacked, we defend our own with bravery and good will: being assued both by thy reading and thy personal experience that in battle it has been rare for Romans to meet with disaster; and that in the final issue of a war we have never come off the worst."

#### PERSO-ROMAN WAR

Shapur made good his threat and began operations against the Romans in the spring of 359 A.D. Avoiding the strongly fortified city of Nisibin, he invested Amid and after a siege of seventy-three days captured the great fortress. With this initial success he retired for the winter with the intent of continuing the campaign in the following spring. In 360 the Persian hosts once more took the field and captured two strongholds from the enemy.

Constantius was forced to be more cautious owing to fear of his cousin Julian, whose army was clamoring for his elevation to the rank of "Augustus." Moving his army leisurely through Asia Minor he arrived in Caesaria and summoned before him the king of Armenia. Arsaces was received very cordially by the aged emperor and returned to Armenia with many gifts from Constantius after he had given his promise not to take arms against the Romans.

But with the death of Constantius on the following year the position of Arsaces became more critical. So far he had succeeded in keeping a strict neutrality between the two mighty adversaries, but Julian, the successor of Constantius, was not tactful in dealing with his allies and friends. He treated Arsaces with haughtiness and demanded actual participation of the Armenians in the war. It was impossible for the Armenian king to refuse the imperious command of the young emperor, so he sent a contingent to serve with the Roman legions, in spite of his wise policy of remaining neutral and congratulating the winner.

Julian was a great soldier and he at once undertook the high command of the war in the East. Moving his headquarters to Antioch he made preparations for the coming campaign, which was one of the most dramatic wars waged between the two mighty empires. For Julian, after great preparations, marched east with an army of one hundred thousand seasoned warriors and after having advanced to the very gates of Ctesiphon, the capital of Shapur, suddenly changed his mind, and without making an attempt to capture the capital of the enemy or even engaging the army

of Shapur in a decisive battle, he gave the order for retreat in the hottest season of the year. The Persian army which had not even made an attempt to stop his advance to the gates of their capital, now began to pursue and harass them in their retreat. Ten days later, in a surprise attack by the Persians, Julian was killed by a javelin piercing his right side, as in his haste he had forgotten to put on his armor.

Jovian, a popular officer in Julian's army, was elected emperor. Soon after that Shapur, whose army also had suffered severe losses, opened negotiations which were welcomed by the new emperor. The peace terms were very harsh for the Romans but Jovian swallowing his pride accepted them. The Roman arms, that had come so very near crushing the power of Persia, ingloriously withdrew from the eastern frontier, leaving Armenia at the mercy of the Persians. For this humiliating peace contained: first, the restoration to Persia of the five provinces beyond the Tigris which had been taken by Diocletian; secondly Nisibin and two other great fortresses were ceded to Shapur, and thirdly Armenia was declared by the Romans to lie outside their own sphere of influence.

#### PERSIAN ENCROACHMENT

It might have been thought that Armenia, left alone to face victorious Shapur, would have easily succumbed before the might of Persia. But this was not the case. Arsaces refused to submit to Iranian domination and valiantly fought the great king of

Persia with all the resources at his command. Some of the disaffected naharars, in the face of this grave danger, joined their forces with the king, but most of them remained indifferent and withdrew into their castles, while a few actively engaged on the side of Persia, fighting against their own country.

The chief of these renegades was Meruzhan Ardsruni, a brave and shrewd man who was incensed with the ambition of becoming king of Armenia, and probably also vengeful against the Arsacidae for the massacre of his family by king Tiran. His chief ally was Vahan Mamikonian, a nobleman from the loyal house of the Armenian commanders-in-chief. These two, apostatizing even their religion, accepted mazdaism and being promised great rewards by Shapur, led the Persian armies in Armenia.

The unequal war between the two neighbors lasted for four years. It is true that Persia did not send large armies to subjugate Armenia. Nor was there pitched battles fought. It was a guerrilla warfare which was as exhaustive for the Armenians as for the Persian troops. The latter, led by the apostate naharars, invaded unfortified places, causing untold misery to the population, but they suffered heavy losses in their encounters with the royal bands.

The long drawn struggle finally taxed the patience of the loyal naharars. The morale of the Armenian army was likewise impaired by the constant desertion of the provincials. For Shapur was up to his old game of dazzling the Armenian nobility by promises of reward. And as the latter had never been too enthusiastic for the king, Arsaces gradually found him-

self facing Persia almost alone with the crown forces. Taking advantage of this situation the Sassanian once more resorted to trickery. He invited the Armenian king to Ctesiphon for drawing up a peace treaty, but Arshak refused to fall into the trap. Thereupon Shapur, through a special emissary, sent some salt to the Armenian monarch, sealed with his own royal signet ring. As this was the most sacred vow of the Persians, Arsaces was finally persuaded by his courtiers to accept the invitation and pay a visit to the Persian Court. Accompanied by his faithful friend and Commander-in-Chief, Vasak Mamikonian, Arshak II left for Ctesiphon. The King of Kings, to crown his perfidy with mockery, gave a banquet in honor of his guest but before it was over the Armenian king was blinded and put in chains. Then Shapur turned to the intrepid Mamikonian and calling him a fox told him that he was to be tried for the murder of the stablemaster. "Up to this moment," answered the fearless Armenian soldier, "I was a lion for you. My feet rested upon two mountains, and on whichever I leaned, it bowed in humiliation. Perhaps you know that Rome and Persia were the two mountains." For these insolent words Vasak was skinned by the order of Shapur. To make his vileness unexcelled the Persian monarch had Vasak's skin filled with straw and placed it in the cell of hapless Arsaces who was imprisoned in the "Castle of Oblivion," so called because whosoever tried to remind the King of Kings of the inmates of that prison was punished by death.

There is a pathetic story told about the death of this tragic king of Armenia, which fits well with his

colorful career. An Armenian general in the Persian army, by the name of Drastamat, having saved the life of Shapur was privileged to ask for any favor which would at once be granted. Drastamat desired to be permitted to visit the Castle of Oblivion and console the royal prisoner. His wish was granted. The general went to the castle, had the king bathed and dressed in royal vestments. Then they dined together with music. Toward the end of the dinner the blind king stabbed himself with the fruit-knife, and Drastamat followed his example dying beside his beloved sovereign.

#### QUEEN PHARRANTZEM

The treaty signed by emperor Jovian was repudiated by Valens who was appointed as ruler of the Eastern Roman Empire by his brother Valentinian. For the latter had divided the Roman Empire into eastern and western sections giving the former to his brother, and retaining the western section for himself. With the accession of Valens, Pap, the only son of Arsaces, even though a minor, returned to Armenia and with the support of the Romans reclaimed the throne of his father. Because of the minority of the new king, however, a regency was established under the administration of Queen Pharrantzem.

The regent was a woman of exceptional ability. She was the daughter of one of the most influential naharars, Andoc of Siuni, and had married king Arshak after her first husband, Tirith Arshakuni, was murdered. It is said that she herself plotted the death of Olympia, the Roman wife of Arsaces, who was

poisoned by a priest. Rumor had it that the priest had given her poison while administering the holy communion.

As a shrewd and far-sighted statesman the Queen realized that this new regime would not meet the approval of Shapur, so, she sent the young king into Roman territory and taking with her the Armenian Court and the royal army she withdrew into the impregnable fortress of Artogerassa. The Persian army overran Armenia and the fortress was invested by troops under the command of two Armenian noblemen, Cylac and Artavan. As the besiegers of Artogerassa were making no headway the two Armenian officers asked the Queen for an interview so that they could convince her to surrender. The interview, however, gave just the opposite result and Cylac and Artavan became most devoted adherents of Pharrantzem. Through their help and guidance the Persian army was defeated and the siege of Artogerassa was raised. Following this initial success she sent a delegation to emperor Valens to remind him of the old alliance and friendship of Armenia and the Roman Empire, and asked his aid in the restoration of Pap to the throne of his father.

Valens, in response to the request of the Armenian queen, assigned the task to general Terentius, who was to escort the young prince to Armenia without an army. In order not to arouse the Persians, Valens had advised a prudent course. Pap was to return unostentatiously and rule for a while without the title of king. But Shapur considered the return of Pap as a repudiation of the peace treaty by Valens

and marched into Armenia with a great army. Through the aid and guidance of the apostate naharars the Persians captured many forts and finally came and laid siege to the fortress of Artogerassa. This time the stronghold was stormed and the regent queen was taken prisoner by the enemy.

This Armenian wife of Arsaces suffered a fate as tragic as that of her husband. She was taken to Persia and in a public square, divested of her garments, she was placed upon the stake and died a horrible death, remaining brave and majestic to the very end.

The tribulations of the Armenians did not come to an end with the capture and death of the unfortunate queen. A veritable reign of terror prevailed throughout the land, due mostly to the fanatical persecution the apostate naharars carried out against their own compatriots. For Shapur, soon after the capture of Artogerassa, withdrew from Armenia leaving to Meruzhan Ardsruni and Vahan Mamikonian the task of pacifying the country. These two became the scourge of the Armenian people. The unspeakable tortures and savage persecutions of Meruzhan especially made his name hateful to his countrymen and synonymous to cruelty and treachery. Not even the widows of the naharars, who had fallen in the service of their king and country, were spared the malevolence of these fiendish renegades. Many of these Armenian gentlewomen were hanged from the towers of their castles.

One of the renegades, Vahan Mamikonian, paid for his brutality with his life, which was struck down with the hand of his own son Samuel. The deed

of this young man represented the awakening of a new spirit in the youth of the land, a realization on the part of the new generation of the horrible and costly blunders of their elders, who through their selfishness, ignorance and pig-headedness had created the prevailing deplorable situation. This young generation had already organized itself into a corps under the able leadership of Mushegh Mamikonian, the son of the intrepid Vasak, and his successor to the high command of the Armenian army.

Mushegh Mamikonian fought courageously and effectively against both internal and foreign foes who had reduced the country into a mass of ruins. He destroyed the temples of fire-worshipping Magians, roasted their priests, hanged the defenders of forts on the walls, and decorated the towers of the castles with the straw-filled effigies of Persian noblemen as a retaliation for his father's death. He even fought against the King of Kings and inflicting a defeat upon him succeeded in capturing his harem together with six hundred dignitaries of high rank. The men he sent to Pap after skinning and filling them with straw, but the women were returned unharmed to Shapur, an act that won for him the respect of the King of Kings.

## CHAPTER XII

### PAP AND THE LAST ARSACIDS

King Pap.—An Exciting Escape.—Roman Perfidy.—Manuel Mamikonian.—Varazdat.—Partition of Armenia.—Chosroes III.—Vram-Shapuh.—End of Arsacid Dynasty.

A war followed these exploits of Mushegh and his followers, in which the Romans were prevailed upon to come to the aid of the Armenians. The Persians were defeated and young Pap was crowned king with the consent of the Roman emperor. It seemed as if a period of peace was at last dawning for the war-ridden country.

But the period could not last long. The position of Armenia as an apple of discord between the Romans and the Persians, the intrigues in the courts of these powerful empires, which brought their repercussions to Armenia, the mutual distrust between the Armenian king and the nobility, the rivalry between church and state, and petty jealousies between great and small officials, had already sealed the fate of the young king. For Pap had inherited all the problems and difficulties his resourceful father had faced with the addition of distrust on the part of the Romans toward him.

The dilemma of Pap was more acute than that of his father Arsaces. The suspicious nature of emperor Valens succeeded in driving the young king toward Iran, despite the fact that Pap had come to an early realization that the only policy he could

safely follow was that of friendly relations with both his neighbor. Then he made a treaty of friendship with Shapur, much to the displeasure of the Romans, to whom he still remained loyal. Even his dastardly act of beheading Cylac and Artavan, through whose devoted efforts he had regained his crown, may be explained by the fact that he was forced into it to win the goodwill of Shapur.

In religious affairs the youthful king showed a strong and determined policy. Seeing a menace in the ever growing power of the Church he began to curb the privileges of the clergy. Charitable organizations and schools, which were completely under the control of the Church, were secularized and teaching of Greek in the schools was forbidden. Pap also made the Armenian Church an independent institution, cutting all religious ties with Caesaria, where the Catholicos of the Armenians was ordained until his time. He also broke his relations with the House of the Illuminator by selecting a Catholicos from a rival family and transferring the seat of the Head of the Armenian Church from Ashtishat to Echmiadsin, right near Valarshapat, the capital, where it has remained ever since.

### HIS ESCAPE AND DEATH

The Persian orientation of Pap, and probably his religious policy too, won for him the enmity of the Roman general Terentius, whom Valens was keeping in Armenia to watch over the activities of the young king. Ammianus Marcellinus, a contemporary Roman

historian, who had taken part in the campaign of Julian against the Persians, recounts in detail the tragic end of Pap. This unbiased account of a foreign historian brings out the character of the men and the spirit of the times in this period of Armenian history. We reproduce it below in its entirety.

"A terrible crime was committed," writes Ammianus, "in the East, where Para,\* king of Armenia was murdered by secret treachery; the original cause of which wicked action we have ascertained to be this:

"Some men of perverse temperament, who delighted in public misfortune, had concocted a number of accusations against this prince for acts which they imputed to him even when scarcely grown up, and had exaggerated them to Valens. Among these men was the Duke of Terentius, a man who always walked about with a downcast melancholy look, and throughout his life was an unwearied sower of discord.

"He, having formed a combination with a few people of Para's nation, whom a consciousness of their own crimes had filled with fear, was continually harping in his letters to the court on the deaths of Cylac and Artabannes; adding also that this same young king was full of haughtiness in all his conduct, and that he behaved with excessive cruelty to his subjects.

"In consequence of these letters, Para, as if it were intended that he should become a partaker in a

\* Ammianus for reasons unknown to us calls the Armenian king by the name of Para. All Armenian authors have called him Pap. In modern pronunciation by western Armenians the name is pronounced Bob.

treaty of which existing circumstances required ratification, was invited to court with all the ceremony to which he was entitled as a king, and then was detained at Tarsus in Cilicia, with a show of honor, without being able to procure permission to approach the emperor's camp, or to learn why his arrival had been so eagerly pressed; since on this point all around him preserved a rigid silence. At last, however, by means of private information, he learnt that Terentius was endeavoring by letter to persuade the Roman sovereign to send without delay another king to Armenia.

"Para, reflecting on this warning, foreboded grievous mischief for himself; and being a man of forethought and contrivance, as he could not perceive any means of safety, except by a speedy departure, by the advice of his most trusty friends he collected a body of 300 persons who had accompanied him from his own country, and with horses selected for special speed, acting as men are wont to do under the pressure of great terror and perplexity, that is to say with more boldness than prudence; late one afternoon he started boldly forth at the head of his escort, formed in one solemn body.

"When the governor of the province, having received information from the officer who kept the gate, came with prompt energy and found him in the suburb, he earnestly entreated him to remain; but finding that he could not prevail upon him, he quitted him, for fear of his own life.

"And not long afterwards Para, with his escort, turned back upon the legion which was pursuing him

and on the point of overtaking him, and pouring arrows upon them as thick as sparks of fire, though designedly missing them, he put them to flight, filling them, tribune and all, with complete consternation, so that they returned to the city with greater speed than they left it.

"After this Para, being released from all fear, continued his laborious and rapid journey for two days and two nights, till he reached the Euphrates, where, for want of boats, he was unable to pass the river, which at that place is full of strong currents and too deep to be forded. His men, not being skillful swimmers, were afraid to trust themselves to the stream. . . . At last he hit upon the following expedient, which seemed the safest in this emergency.

"They took a number of little beds which they found in the neighboring houses, and supported them each on two bladders, of which there were plenty at hand in the vineyards. And then he and his nobles placed themselves each on a bed, leading their horses after them, and so floated down and across the stream; by which contrivance, after extreme danger, they at last reached the opposite bank.

"All the rest swam their horses, and though they were terribly tossed about and often almost sunk by the eddying stream, they also reached the opposite bank; when having rested for a short time and refreshed themselves, they proceeded on their way.

"When this transaction became known, the emperor being greatly moved by the king's flight fearing he would break off his alliance, sent Daniel and Barzimeres to bring him back; and he placed under their



command a thousand archers, prepared for a rapid march by the lightness of their equipment.

"These officers, trusting to their acquaintance with the country, and feeling sure that Para, as a stranger who was not accustomed to it, would take a roundabout way, sought to cut him off by marking a short cut through some valleys; and having divided their forces, they blocked the two nearest roads, which were three miles from one another, in order that whichever Para took he might be caught before he expected it. But he escaped their manoeuvre in this way:

"A traveller who happened to be hastening toward the western bank of the river, saw that the two roads were filled with armed soldiers, and accordingly quitted this road in order to avoid them, and made his way by an almost invisible path, which lay between them, overgrown with bushes and brambles, and fell in with the Armenians, who were by this time greatly fatigued. He was brought before the king, and being admitted by him to a private conference, related to him secretly what he had seen, and was detained in safety.

"And presently, without anything being done to give an idea that they were alarmed, a horseman was sent secretly to the road on the right side to prepare a resting place and some food. And when he had been gone a little time, another was sent to the left with directions to move with great rapidity, and do the same thing; neither horseman being aware that the other had been sent in a different direction.

"And after this arrangement had been thus

cleverly made, the king himself, with his escort, retraced his steps through the jungle by which the traveller had come, taking him for his guide, and passing through this overgrown path, which was almost too narrow for a loaded horse, he left the Roman soldiers behind him and so escaped. Meanwhile our troops, who had made prisoners of the soldiers who had been thus sent out to impose upon them, waited a long time, while watching for the king. And while they were thus waiting for the arrival of Para, he reached his kingdom in safety, where he was received with great joy by his countrymen, and still remained unshaken in his fidelity to us, burying in silence the injuries which he had received."

Ammianus recounts how the two Roman officers explained their failure to the emperor. They said that the Armenian king was a magician, "skilled in Circean incantations, able to transform people or to afflict them with sickness in a marvellous manner." They ascribed the escape of Pap or Para to his power of making himself invisible.

"In this manner," continues Ammianus, "the hatred which Valens had conceived against him was increased to an incredible degree; and plan after plan was laid to take his life, either by force or strategem; and orders to that effect were transmitted by secret letters to Trajan, who at that time was in Armenia, in chief command of the forces in that kingdom.

"Trajan, accordingly, began to surround Para with treacherous blandishments—at one time showing him some letters of Valens, which appeared to indicate that he was favorably disposed towards the king

—at another, partaking cheerfully of his entertainments, he at last, with great apparent respect (but in pursuance of a deliberate plot) invited him to supper. Para, fearing no hostility, came, and was placed in the seat of honor at the feast.

“Exquisite delicacies were set before him, and the splendid palace resounded with the music of lyres and lutes. Presently, when the wine had circulated freely, the master of the feast quitted it for a moment, under pretense of some natural want, and immediately a ferocious barbarian of the troop they call Suprae was sent in, brandishing a drawn sword, and with a terribly ferocious countenance, to murder the youth, against whose escape ample precautions had now been taken.

“As soon as he saw him, the king who as it happened was on the further side of the couch, jumped up and drew his dagger to defend his life by every means in his power, but was stabbed in the breast, and fell like a miserable victim, being shamefully cut to pieces with repeated blows.

“By this foul contrivance was his credulity shamefully deceived at a feast which is respected even on the coast of the Euxine Sea, under the eye of the Deity of Hospitality; and the blood of a stranger and a guest was sprinkled on the splendid tablecloths, and, by its foaming gore, filled the guests with loathing, who at once dispersed in great horror.”

Thus came to an abrupt end the career of the young prince who might have proved himself as talented as his father, had not Roman treachery snuffed

out his life, as Persian perfidy had done with his father's.

## VARAZDAT

Although the treacherous death of king Pap aroused the Armenians against the perfidious emperor, the high officials of the kingdom, gathered in a state council under the leadership of Mushegh Mamikonian, decided not to revolt against Byzantium, as such an act would leave the country exposed to attacks from both Romans and Persians. So the new king, another Arshakuni prince called Varazdat, whom Valens sent to Armenia, was acclaimed by the populace.

The new king was a great athlete who had won renown throughout the Roman empire. He had shown his athletic prowess by taking part in Olympic games, and by defeating many champions. He was popular and well liked by his subjects who expected him to bring peace to the country. But it was not an athlete that Armenia needed, but a statesman. Varazdat with his easy going and simple nature could not cope with the complicated problems of his kingdom. So he became a figurehead while the real power was exercised by Bat Saharruni, a nobleman who had been his tutor. Intrigues and plots followed each other among the courtiers who were divided into two cliques.

Mushegh Mamikonian, as the most talented of

the Armenian officials in the Court of Varazdat, was the object of constant plots by the Saharruni group. To win the king to their side they accused the brave Commander-in-Chief as an accomplice in the murder of Pap. The simple-minded king believed the accusation, cleverly concocted by his former tutor, and gave his consent to a plot to murder the great soldier. Mushegh was invited by the king to a banquet together with all the high dignitaries of his Court. Before the feast was over the king rose and walked out. This being the signal, the conspirators rushed upon Mushegh and held his arms. "What is the meaning of this?" asked the General of Varazdat who was now at the door of the banquet hall. "Ask king Pap and he will tell you," answered the king and left the hall. "I would have much preferred to have met my death upon my horse," were the last words of the brave Mamikonian as the dagger of Bat Saharruni cut his throat.

The murder of Mushegh not only alienated the powerful House of Mamikonians, but actually led to a civil war. Up to that moment the Mamikonians had been the most ardent advocates of the pro-Roman orientation, but the perfidy of Varazdat drove them into the opposing camp. The desertion of this highly influential family had serious consequences upon the career of Varazdat and in the end caused his downfall.

The turn of events in Armenia pleased Shapur very much. Nor did he fail to take advantage of the disaffection of Mamikonians and their followers. There were always Armenian noblemen in the Persian Court

and king Shapur discovered Manuel Mamikonian, brother of murdered Mushegh. This nobleman had been brought to Persia as a captive, had entered the army of the King of Kings and had distinguished himself in the wars that Shapur had waged against the White Huns in the East. Upon the news of Mushegh's murder he summoned Manuel before him and appointing him as the leader of the pro-Persian party of Armenia, sent him back to his country.

#### MANUEL MAMIKONIAN

Manuel Mamikonian returning to Armenia challenged king Varazdat to leave the country. Having proclaimed himself as Commander-in-Chief of the Armenian army without the consent of the king, who had already conferred that office upon Bat Saharruni, he mustered an army and marched against the forces of Varazdat. A battle took place in the plain of Carin during which king Varazdat and the Mamikonian General met in a personal encounter. Varazdat was put to flight and his army was scattered. Bat Saharruni, his son, and several other naharars who had been accessories to the murder of Mushegh, were captured and brought before Manuel, who ordered them to be executed. Varazdat, however, fled the country and took refuge in Byzantium where he ended his days.

With the flight of Varazdat the civil war came to an end. Manuel Mamikonian became the actual dictator of the country, without, however, aspiring to the crown. He proclaimed Zarmanducht, the widow of

Pap, as Queen, taking over himself the guardianship of her two sons, Arsaces and Valarsaces, as the legitimate heirs to the throne. But Manuel knew well that Armenia could not exist without the protection of one of her neighbors. In view of her recent experiences with the Romans the Queen preferred Persia. Consequently a delegation was sent to Ctesiphon to request Shapur to take Armenia under his protection. The king of Persia was highly pleased with this voluntary submission of the Armenians and he returned the envoys with many gifts and three crowns, one for the queen and one for each young prince. Furthermore he appointed Suren, one of his high officials, as viceroy, giving him a small army for the protection of the country.

The accord with Persia, however, did not last long. Meruzhan, the old renegade, caused another war between the two neighbors, in which the victory remained with the Armenians. This treacherous Armenian nobleman, who had caused so much suffering to his nation, was killed in this war and his head, placed on a spike, was brought to the queen.

Soon after the conclusion of the war a great national conclave was held in Carin, in which the young crown prince Arsaces, who had come of age, was proclaimed king. The congress also decided to ask emperor Theodosius to take Armenia under his protection, to which effect an embassy was sent to Constantinople. And having thus brought his work to a successful end, Manuel Mamikonian the veteran soldier passed on, being mourned by a grateful nation to whom he had brought peace and prestige.

## PARTITION OF ARMENIA

When Shapur III came to the throne of Persia in 384 A.D. he decided to follow an aggressive policy toward Armenia. As Arsaces III, son of Pap, was under the influence of Byzantium, Shapur appointed another Arsacid prince, under the name of Chosroes III, as king of Armenia. The appeal to emperor Theodosius to protect the integrity of the country brought no result, as Byzantium had already made an agreement with Persia for the partition of Armenia. So Arsaces accepted the inevitable and became the ruler of the western part of the country, while Chosroes reigned over eastern Armenia, which was about five times as large as the other. This act of Theodosius, however, was to have disastrous results for the very safety of the Byzantine Empire, since Armenia was a bulwark against eastern hordes and instrumental in saving the Romans from many unpleasant encounters with barbaric tribes, and with her elimination the Roman Empire would be left exposed to new invasions.

With the death of Arsaces the semi-independence of western Armenia came to an end, as Byzantium named no successor to him. The country was reduced to the status of a province and governed by counts appointed by the court in Constantinople. As the new regime abridged the privileges of the naharars there was an exodus of the nobility from the country into the court of king Chosroes in eastern or Persian Armenia.

Chosroes III, encouraged by the voluntary adherence of the naharars to him, made an attempt to

restore the country to its former integrity. Through a secret mission, which he sent to Constantinople, he asked the aid of Theodosius for the execution of this plan. But the Byzantine emperor, who had short-sightedly consented to the partition of Armenia, refused to be swayed by the offer of having the country once more under his influence. Although the plan was abandoned, Bahram IV of Persia learned of the secret negotiations and at once called Chosroes to Ctesiphon for an explanation. But he was given no opportunity to explain his actions, as upon his arrival in the Persian capital he was summarily put into chains and sent to the Castle of Oblivion.

#### VRAM-SHAPUH

Vram-Shapuh, a brother of Chosroes, was crowned by Bahram as the new king of Armenia. It was during the reign (391-414 A.D.) of this king that the Armenian alphabet was adopted, which produced the "Golden Age" of the Armenian literature. As his political and diplomatic activities were under the control of Persia, this king had the wisdom to give his whole attention to the development of national culture. So he patronized learning and together with the Catholicos Sahak, encouraged a scholarly priest, called Mesrop, to develop Armenian characters, so that a national literature could be produced. A cultural revival was the result of the combined activities of king and Catholicos. Many young people were sent to centers of Greek culture to receive an education at the

expense of the government. Many schools were opened in Armenia giving the youth an opportunity to be educated in their mother tongue. A new spirit was born, the feeling of national consciousness, which was to become one of the chief factors in the preservation of the race through centuries of persecution and suffering.

After the death of Vram-Shapuh the Catholicos Sahak personally appealed to Yezdigirt I to restore Chosroes III to his throne, as the former king had already been released from the prison and was living in the Persian court. The request of St. Sahak was granted and Chosroes returned to his throne, but died within a year. Whereupon Yezdigirt decided to put an end to the Arsacid dynasty and appointed his own son Shapur as king of the Armenians. The alien king, however, did not meet with the approval of his subjects, and during the four years of his reign over Armenia he failed to win their hearts. He was even derided by his courtiers for his Persian customs. Upon the death of his father, Shapur returned to Persia to claim the Sassanian throne, but failed to realize his ambition, falling victim to a court conspiracy. With the assassination of Shapur, his brother Bahram V was crowned king of Iran.

For three years Armenia remained without a king, until finally Catholicos Sahag sent a delegation to Bahram and asked him to appoint a king for the Armenians. The choice of the King of Kings was the young son of Vram-Shapuh, who was eighteen years old when Bahram crowned him under the name of Artaxias III and sent him to Armenia.

The young king proved himself to be a weakling. He pursued a life of pleasure and lasciviousness, thus making himself obnoxious to the people as well as to the naharars. It is related that he further enraged the nobility by his undue attentiveness to their women. The feeling against him became so high that the naharars finally made a fateful decision. They asked Bahram to abolish the office of king in Armenia and to govern the country through a viceroy or "marzpan," which in Persian means military governor. As this meant the elimination of the last vestige of independence, Catholicos Sahak tried to persuade the nobility to refrain from such a course. His efforts were in vain and in the year 428 A.D. Bahram V deposed Artaxias as king and appointed Veh-Mihr-Shapur as the first marzpan of Armenia.

Thus the ambition of the Sassanian dynasty to drive the Arsacids out of Armenia was finally realized, but only through the connivance and co-operation of the Armenian nobility.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Christianity In Armenia.—The Catholicos.—The Clergy.—The National Church.—"Lusavorchi Tun."—Nerses the Great.—Saint Sahak.

With the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia during the reign of Tiridates II, the Armenian Church became a prime factor in the life of the nation. The role that the Church played in the affairs of the Armenian people from that time on to the present day has been of vital importance. For the activities of the Church embraced every phase of national life in addition to the spiritual field. Politics, education, charities, literature, diplomacy, even the national defense became the concern of the religious leaders. For sixteen hundred years the Church remained the chief bulwark for the preservation of the Armenian race, not only because of its spiritual fortitude but also by its political activities.

That Christianity had penetrated into Armenia before the time of St. Gregory is a matter of record. The apostles St. Bartholomew and St. Thaddeus carried the new religion into Armenia soon after the death of Christ. They both met the fate of martyrs. According to Armenian tradition St. Thaddeus had even succeeded in converting virgin Sanducht, the daughter of king Sanadruk, into the new religion, yet she too fell a victim to the persecution of her father,

winning the distinction of being the first Christian woman martyr of Armenia. In the second century of our era there was a Christian community in Armenia under a bishop called Meruzhan. There is no doubt that missionaries from Edessa and Nisibin, which were important centers of Christian activities in the earliest times, had made Armenia a field of their religious operations. There was an important Christian community in the vicinity of Van in the third century. Especially the western section of the country, which was in close touch with the Greek cities of Asia Minor, must have come under Christian influence in a manner that was alarming to the pagan kings, who ordered their persecution.

Saint Gregory, a man of high birth, educated in the Greek schools of Caesaria, the great center of learning of those times, must have come with the intent of converting the Armenians into the new religion. His first attempt having failed, he himself was subjected to the treatment accorded the followers of the Nazarene. In the end however he was victorious. Now the roles were changed and the persecuted became the persecutors. Pagan priests were put to death and all their properties were appropriated by the new religious order. Churches rose upon the ruins of pagan temples, and ministers of the gospel supplanted the servants of the pagan deities.

### THE CATHOLICOS

The new religion soon developed its own organization. As every religious order had its supreme leader

so the Armenian Church came to have a Catholicos called a "Hairapet," leader father of all Armenians. His position corresponded to that of the Chief Priest of the Hebrews. Besides being the supreme spiritual head of the nation, socially he was second to none in rank, including the king, with whom he shared honors on a basis of equality. The catholicos lived in a palace as sumptuous as that of the king himself. When he received the king in his palace the latter had to wait until the "Hairapet" showed him to a seat. With him, however it was different. The Catholicos could enter the royal presence and sit wherever he pleased.

The Head of the Armenian Church was so influential that he could publicly reprimand the king or the queen for acts which he deemed unbecoming a Christian. He even had the power to anathemize the royalty and the nobility. Thus the queen of Chosroes II was anathemized for her immorality; king Tiran was reprimanded for his "inane and mean" action, while king Pap was subjected to anathema for his immoral sins. Sometimes, however, anathema was resorted to for political purposes, to counteract the attempt of some kings to curb their ever increasing power. The usual punishment for the person subjected to anathema was excommunication and denial of burial for his body after death.

The Catholicos played also an important role in the affairs of the state. He was the king's chief adviser and often his negotiator with other governments. Both Persia and Byzantium recognized his office and showed reverence to him. So it is not surprising that

after the loss of political independence almost every nation that subjugated the country recognized the Catholicos not only as the religious but also as the political head of the Armenian people.

The official family of the Catholicos consisted of twelve bishops, four vartabeds and 60 priests, in addition to several clerical officials. They were all attached to the Armenian Holy See and lived in special quarters in the palace of the Catholicos. In addition to these there were numerous lay officials and dependants who attended to the vast possessions of the "Hairapet." The hospitality of the Holy See was unique and usually there were hundreds of people partaking their meals with the Catholicos. Even the common people had access to the table of some Hairapets.

After the Catholicos came the bishops of the provinces. As the church was on the same system of decentralization as the state, each bishop was the supreme spiritual head of his see or province, with broad powers of autonomy. The bishoprics too had their possessions, which were grants made to them by the naharars or other members of the nobility. Another source of income for them was the fines they collected from judicial cases they handled as well as from a special tax and from donations. The provincial churches too in time became very rich and influential, thus arousing the jealousy of the nobility in their districts. The Ramiks, however, usually found protection with the church and its leaders, and became fanatical adherents of the clergy.

## THE CLERGY

The Armenian clergy was divided into two classes—the secular and the spiritual. All the church officials who served in worldly surroundings, from the bishops down to the humblest priest of small villages, belonged to the former class. They were the spiritual guides and pastors of the faithful, teaching and leading them in religious matters.

The other class kept away from men and from worldly affairs, and devoted all their time to spiritual and cultural pursuits. They too were divided into two groups, living under a strict discipline and striving for the spiritual betterment of themselves as well as of their fellow men. The first group was organized in large religious orders and lived in monasteries, while the others lived alone, or in small units, far from human habitation, in such places as deserts, caves or woods, following the precepts of Christianity literally and striving to attain spiritual perfection. Both the first group, the monks, and the second, the hermits, were celibates, while the secular clergy, from the Catholicos down, married and formed families. Among the clergy the monks were the most devout and the most spiritual of all. They had no worldly possessions nor even thought of them. Possessing only one garment and bare-footed, they lived on vegetation. Very often they went hungry, thirsty and without sleep. Disdaining all the pleasures of life they sought spiritual perfection in self-abnegation.

The monasteries, on the other hand, became centers of learning and culture. It was through these



religious sanctuaries that priceless treasures of ancient culture were preserved. Secure against outside interference and free from worldly cares, the monks devoted their time to education, science, literature and thinking. They gave to the nation many church leaders, scholars, scientists, historians, saints and even military leaders. The hospitality of these institutions was unique. They were always open before the travelers who remained there overnight receiving their meals and lodging without cost. This custom persisted until our own times. For up to the beginning of the World War Armenian monasteries served as free hostels to all races and creeds without discrimination.

Monasteries were usually built on locations of strategic value. Having a commanding position in the district they dominated the outlying territory and thus were in times of war secure against enemy attack. These religious institutions too became economically independent through the grants of lands and donations they received from high places. The monastery of Glak in Taraun, for instance, owned twelve villages with nearly twenty-three thousand inhabitants, who were engaged in cultivating the lands of the institution.

Education was under the direct supervision of the church, with the clergy acting as teachers. Before the discovery of the Armenian alphabet teaching was conducted in Greek and Assyrian languages. With the introduction of the Armenian characters education received a great impetus. Schools were opened in various parts of the country and education was

given the new generation in the mother tongue. Many future leaders were prepared in these schools, which became the hotbed of Armenian nationalism, especially during the fifth and sixth centuries of our era. Even Greek and Assyrian residents in Armenia were imbued with the new spirit of nationalism and enthusiastically contributed their share in the renaissance of the country. In the first crop of the national schools many names became famous, among which we can mention Vartan Mamikonian, Vahan Amatuni and Hmayak Mamikonian who became leaders in the political field; Shalita, the Assyrian, Epiphanos the Greek, and Gind of Taraun became famous as religious teachers; Bishop Khad of Carin attained great prestige, and Father Athanas, the abbot of the monastery of Glak, formed the Armenian calendar. We will speak of the writers produced by this revival of learning in another chapter.

### NATIONAL CHURCH

As we have seen, Christianity existed in Armenia long before St. Gregory's time, but it was the Illuminator that gave the Armenian Church its distinction. As St. Thaddeus, the Apostle, was considered to be the first head of the church, St. Gregory called his Christian organization Apostolic, which designation is retained to the present day. The early official church of Armenia was not, however, a separate unit, but formed a part of the one Christian organization. St. Gregory himself, as we have seen, went to Caesaria

to be ordained Catholicos. This custom prevailed for more than three score years until king Pap established a national church by severing his relations with Caesaria and the Church of Rome.

Thus the Armenian Church became an independent unit among the Christian denominations and this independence has been retained for nearly sixteen hundred years. The separation from the Roman Church, during the reign of king Pap, brought also another change. Up to that time the seat of the church was in the city of Ashtishat, the old religious center of pagan Armenia. Young Pap, however, brought the Catholicos to Valarshapat, his capital, and made Echmiadsin the center of religious life. The final separation from the western churches came in the year 491 A.D. when a religious synod, convened in Valarshapat, condemned the dogmas adopted in the Council of Chalcedon. Without going into the details of the dogmas promulgated in the early Christian Church synods and their rejection or acceptance by the Armenians, it might be asserted that the indifference of the Roman Catholic as well as the Eastern Orthodox Churches toward the plight of their co-religionists in Armenia did probably have a decisive influence in the matter of the estrangement of the Armenians.

#### THE HOUSE OF THE ILLUMINATOR

Saint Gregory the Illuminator, in addition to his fateful religious activities or in consequence of them, founded a religious dynasty which is known as the

House of the Illuminator ("Lusavorchi Dun"). Whether he intended it or not, the Chief Priesthood or the office of the Catholicos became a monopoly of his family, inherited by son from father. As we have already seen this office was higher and had incomparably more influence than that of any naharar. It is not therefore surprising that his descendants clung to the office until the passing away of the last male representative of the family.

Both sons of St. Gregory, Vrthanes and Aristaces, occupied the religious throne founded by their father. Their reigns were peaceful and without events of great importance. Aristaces, during the lifetime of his father, took part in the Council of Nicea as the representative of the Armenian Church in this first ecclesiastical convention which took place in the year 325 A.D.

Husik, the eldest son of Vrthanes, had married the daughter of king Tiran before he became Catholicos. The marriage, however, had been a failure from the very beginning. The future Catholicos had left his wife on the second day of their marriage, thus creating bad feeling between the two highest houses in the land. The enmity between Catholicos and king was intensified with the death of Husik's wife, after giving birth to twins. The Chief Priest anathemized his father-in-law in retaliation for the latter's hostility toward him. But when he tried to reprimand the king publicly, refusing him admittance to the church, the enraged sovereign ordered his men to beat the Catholicos to death.

The twin sons of Husik were not allowed to attain the religious throne of their father. According to the historian Phaustus they were dissipated young men who resigning from the church pursued military careers until "the angel of the Lord came down to put an end to their drunken existence."

### NERSES THE GREAT

For a time the religious throne of Armenia was occupied by clergymen who were not descendants of St. Gregory. But an offspring of Athanagines, one of the "dissipated" sons of Husik, was chosen by Arsaces II to occupy the throne of the Illuminator. He was Saint Nerses who was brought up by Greek priests in Caesaria and had married the daughter of a Greek prince in Constantinople. He had returned to Armenia and was serving as a military aide-de-camp to the king when the naharars requested his elevation to the office of Catholicos. In spite of his refusal he was induced to enter upon a religious career and became one of the greatest "Hairapets" of the Armenian Church.

Saint Nerses perfected the organization of the Church. He paid special attention to education and sent promising young men to great western centers of learning, such as Alexandria, Athens, Byzantium and Antioch, with the object of introducing Greek culture into Armenian life. He built schools, hospitals, orphanages and hostelrys throughout the land. New monasteries and convents were opened in every sec-

tion of the country, estimated by a contemporary historian to be over two thousand. His religious, educational and cultural activities transformed the life of the people. For these and for his political activities he has been called Nerses the Great.

So long as St. Nerses and Arsaces II worked in harmony the country became prosperous and learning and arts took big strides. But when the king began to plan a strong central government he found both the naharars and the Catholicos opposed to him. When St. Nerses saw that he could not prevail upon the determined king he made the one mistake of his life by taking the side of the naharars and by severing his relations with the king. He left the capital and never again saw Arsaces.

Saint Nerses came back when young Pap ascended the throne of his father. The old Catholicos and the youthful king co-operated for a while to rebuild the country. But when Pap too began to pursue a policy similar to his fathers, the "Hairapet's" attitude underwent a change and the friendship between the two was broken. It is said that king Pap murdered the famous Catholicos by personally offering him poisoned wine. His death was mourned by all, high and low, and during his funeral the king with all his dignitaries, the naharars, the "azats" and the "ramiks" marched behind his barse as a tribute to the great religious leader who had done so much for the betterment of his people.

After the death of Nerses for nearly twenty years the exalted office of Catholicos was occupied by outsiders. In 390 A.D. Chosroes III restored the re-

ligious throne to the last male descendant of the Illuminator by conferring the high office upon Sahak Partev (Parthian). He was thirty-five years old at the time, but he was a wise, far-sighted and highly educated man. In addition to his schooling in Armenia, under the supervision of his father, Catholicos Sahak had studied abroad, lived and worked in great centers of Greek culture, becoming a great Greek scholar himself. It was through his encouragement that St. Mesrop discovered the Armenian alphabet and thus revolutionized the whole field of education in Armenia.

Catholicos Sahak, the last of his family, made every effort to save the Arsacid dynasty. The intrigues of the naharars had created an intolerable situation in the political life of the country and although the advices and exhortations of the "Hairapet" were of no avail in the end, he succeeded in postponing the fall of the famous dynasty. The Persian faction among the naharars had become so powerful that they finally got rid both of king and Catholicos. The Persian king took upon himself the right of appointing the religious head of the Armenians, as he was already holding the right of appointing their political leader in the person of marzpan.

The scholarly Catholicos lived to the ripe age of eighty-five and even though approached several times to resume his former office, he refused and lived in retirement in his estate in Bagrevand.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE AGE OF THE MARZPANS I

#### THE FIRST NATIONAL REBELLION

Persian Policy toward Armenia.—Yezdigirt II and his Plans.—  
The Armenian Factions.—Vartan Mamikonian.—Vasak Siuni.—  
The Revolt.—The Battle of Avarair.—The Defeat.

For over two hundred years after the fall of the Arsacid dynasty, from 428 A.D. to 640 A.D., Armenia remained under Persian domination. As we have already seen, the Persian rule was imposed upon the country at the request of the Armenian nobility, who being tired of the interference of the king with their affairs, made a bargain with the Sassanian ruler to supplant the Arshakunis with governors appointed by the King of Kings.

The action of the Armenian naharars was not as reprehensible as it appears to a casual observer. It was far from their minds to sell out their country to a foreign ruler. What they actually did, to their way of thinking, was the substitution of one set of foreign rulers for another. For the proud aristocracy of Armenia considered the Arshakunis as foreigners and resented their rule throughout the duration of that dynasty. And when the Armenian kings began their policy of abridging the prerogatives of the naharars, the feeling of resentment and jealousy on the part of the aristocracy became so intense that they made up their minds to sacrifice even the nominal independ-

ence of the country, after having received the assurance that their privileges would be respected.

It must be admitted that the change worked advantageously for the naharars. The new regime made no attempt to alter the existing social order. The country as a whole kept the semblance of autonomy it had under the Arsacids. The central government was preserved almost in its entirety. The ministries or "agencies," as the Armenians called them, remained almost intact. The naharars retained their private troops, and the national army continued to be under the command of an Armenian Naharar—usually a Mamikonian.

### FRIENDLY PERSIA

The main change, as we said before, was in the substitution of a marzpan for the king. And even in this case there was a striking similarity between the old and the new rulers. In reality the Arcasid kings of Armenia were political appointees and no king could have expected to remain in power without the consent of the Roman emperor, unless he became a vassal of the Iranian ruler. They could follow no foreign policy that did not meet the approval of the Roman empire. The marzpans too were appointed by a foreign ruler with duties and privileges very similar to those of the king. The marzpan was somewhat like a dean of the naharars, watching over their actions but never meddling with their internal affairs. As the representative of the Iranian king, he collected

the taxes and remitted them to the royal treasury at Ctesiphon.

At first the Armenian nobility did not lose by the elimination of the royalty. On the contrary their privileges seemed to be more secure under the new arrangement. The naharars became like petty kings, ruling over their domains as before, living on the labor of their peasant serfs, and leading a life of pleasure and enjoyment. As the rivalry between Byzantium and Persia had almost been eliminated by the partition of Armenia, the people too began to enjoy a period of peace and prosperity.

The rebellion of naharars against the Arshakuni kings was caused principally by the attempt of the latter to curb the broad powers of the aristocracy. Under Persian rule they seemed to be free from such a policy, and they remained contented and loyal to the new sovereign so long as their privileges were not encroached upon by the Persian Court. This tolerant policy was pursued especially by Yezdigirt I, even before the removal of Arshakuni kings, as a far-sighted diplomacy to win the complete confidence of the ruling class in Armenia. For Yezdigirt knew well that Byzantium might change its foreign policy toward its eastern neighbor and attempt to recover Armenia. The best insurance against such a move was the contentment of the Armenians with the Persian rule, and in order to accomplish this the Sassanian ruler had made an exception to the Persian custom of ruling a subject nation.

The main motive behind this policy of catering to the wishes of the Armenian nobility remained

hidden. The Persian ruler was cognizant of the fact that the Armenians were closely attached to the western empire by cultural and religious ties. To win the Armenians over completely to the Persian side it was necessary first to weaken and then to break those ties. The political and social privileges granted to the naharars were to pave the way to a closer understanding between the two nations on cultural and religious lines.

The Persian rulers, however, had counted without a new factor that was about to enter into Armenian life and frustrate the plans of Iranianizing Armenia. That was the discovery of the Armenian alphabet by St. Mesrop, which not only strengthened the national and religious feeling among the Armenians, but completely permeated their thoughts with Greek culture and Christian teaching. This proved the bankruptcy of the policy of toleration. Even Yezdigirt, who had taken a favorable attitude toward the Christians, altered his policy during the later years of his reign and appointed his own son to the Armenian throne, to check the new spirit of nationalism in the country and more or less counteract the rapprochement between the Armenians and their western co-religionists. This attempt too failed to accomplish any results as both Yezdigirt and his son Shapuh were killed in 420 A.D.

Bahram Gur, the successor of Yezdigirt I, as a result of his unsuccessful war with Byzantium, was forced to adopt a more cautious policy toward Armenia, although he believed in taking repressive measures against the naharars. Yesdigirt II, however,

who succeeded him in 438 A.D., completely reversed the policy of tolerance and resorted to coercive measures to restrict the prerogatives of the naharars and to eradicate Byzantine influence from Armenia.

### YEZDIGIRT'S POLICY

According to ancient Armenian historians of this period, such as Eghishe and Lazar of Pharpe, Yezdigirt intended to suppress Christianity in Armenia, but modern scholars consider this to be an exaggeration on their part. It is generally agreed, however, that the Persian king, after inflicting a severe defeat upon the Roman legions in 441 A.D. and after a successful campaign against warlike tribes on the eastern frontiers of his kingdom from 442 to 448 A.D., turned his attention to Armenia and made a determined effort to take away the special privileges given to that country and reduce her to the status of a Persian province. It is likewise accepted that Yezdigirt II attempted to convert the Armenian nobility to Mazdaism, although it is doubtful if he wanted to suppress Christianity altogether in Armenia. For as the naharars were the ruling class of the country, their conversion alone would have sufficed for the success of Yezdigirt's program of alienating Armenians from western ideology. Furthermore the King of Kings had no desire to tolerate the special privileges that only the Armenian nobility possessed throughout his vast empire.

It is doubtful that Yezdigirt was actuated by other than political motives for such a decision. The

assertion that he was a religious fanatic who wanted to spread Mazdaism throughout the world is hardly substantiated by the undisputed fact that Persia was more tolerant than Christian Byzantium in matters pertaining to religious worship.

Yezdigirt was very fortunate in having men of high calibre in his service. Of these the most famous and the most capable was a Parthian nobleman, a descendant from the Mihranian branch of the Arsacid family, a man called Mihr-Nerseh, who having served as commander of the royal forces had become the right hand man of the king. As the grand vizier of Yezdigirt, he conceived the idea of Iranianizing Armenia, according to Lazar of Pharpe, who makes the old diplomat say to his sovereign:

"You as well as all Iranians know how great and useful Armenia is. But it has common borders with and is near to the realm of the emperor (Byzantine), having the same laws and the same service. But if we can familiarize them with our laws, which can be done, then they will love you and Iran and keep away from the emperors and their laws and their country. Then the country will be on friendly terms and united with us. Once the Armenians are heartily with us then the Georgians and the Albanians will be like our own."

The plan of Mihr-Nerseh to Iranianize Armenia was put into practice in 449 A.D. His first step consisted of sending an edict to the high nobility of Armenia, reproaching them for their foolish persistence in the Roman ways and manners and asking them to study the Persian religion and convince

themselves of its superiority. The minister of the king commanded them to answer his edict point by point or else to report to the royal court.

Upon the receipt of the edict a great state council was held in the city of Artaxata, under the presidency of Catholicos Joseph. The meeting was attended by eighteen influential naharars as well as by other members of noble families, seventeen bishops, and a number of vice-bishops, abbotts and priests. After every one present had vowed to remain firm upon his faith till death, they prepared an answer to the edict, explaining their stand and trying to prove the truth of Christianity. Furthermore they announced their intention of remaining loyal to Mihr-Nerseh if they were allowed to worship their own God. The letter ended in the following words: "No one can deviate us from our faith, neither angels nor men; neither sword nor fire. All our wealth is in your hands; our bodies are in your power; do what you please with us."

### ARMENIAN FACTIONS

The unanimity that the council of Artaxata disclosed shows that those who participated in it realized the true meaning of the Persian decree. For the representatives of both the pro-Roman and the pro-Persian parties were there. The two political factions which had come into existence during the Artaxiad period had developed into two distinct schools of foreign policy for the country. Whereas the pro-Parthian faction had been the nationalistic group in the earlier periods, now the pro-Romans considered

themselves as the defenders of national entity and the national religion. The nobility were divided between the two groups, more by their geographic position than by their convictions.

The Persian faction had as its leader Vasak Siuni, who had been appointed marzpan of Armenia in 442 and was still holding that office, the highest political position in the country. He was the nephew of Queen Pharantzem, the heroic wife of Arsaces II. At the age of fourteen he had been sent to Ctesiphon as a hostage but when his father died he was not made "tanuter" because of his arrogant answer to the King of Kings when the question of succession had come up. The young nobleman, deprived of his paternal heritage, had remained in the Persian Court and entered the service of the Sassanians. Having proved his ability as a great soldier and a shrewd administrator, he had been first appointed as marzpan of Georgia, and later, in the year 442 A.D., he had become the "dean of the Armenian nobility" and elevated to the marzpanship of his own country. As the leader of the Persian party he was present in the Council of Artaxata with some of the influential members of his party which included the Bagratunis, the Horhorunis, the Abahunis, one faction of the Ardsruni family, the Palunis and others. The faction was later called the "Party of the Apostates."

Vartan Mamikonian was the chief of the Roman or Greek party, as the Eastern Roman Empire is also called the Greek or the Byzantine Empire. He was the "tanuter" of his illustrious family and a descendant of St. Gregory on his mother's side. The

Catholicos St. Sahak being his grandfather, he was brought up under his influence and became a devout Christian. Bahram Gur had appointed him as Commander-in-Chief of the Armenian army, which, as we have seen, was a hereditary office of his family. He too had seen service under the King of Kings, fighting in the war against the Asiatic tribes at the eastern frontier of Persia, and winning the admiration of the king of Iran for his bravery. Other leaders of the national party included Hmaiak and Hamazasp Mamikonians, the brothers of Vartan, Arshavir Kamsarakan, Artak Arsharuni, Vahan Amatuni, Nershapuh Ardsruni and others.

The answer to the edict of Mihr-Nerseh by the Armenian leaders brought into the open the repressive policy of Yezdigirt II. By a royal decree the king of Iran ousted the naharars from their offices and deposing them as "tanuters," ordered them to appear before him in Ctesiphon. When the cream of Armenian aristocracy presented themselves in the Court of the King of Kings, instead of the usual reception they were abruptly told by the Persian autocrat that if on the morrow they did not kneel down with him and worship the Sun at its rising and accept it as their god, they would be immediately exiled into a far away corner of his kingdom. Uttering further threats about their families and their people, Yezdigirt dismissed them curtly.

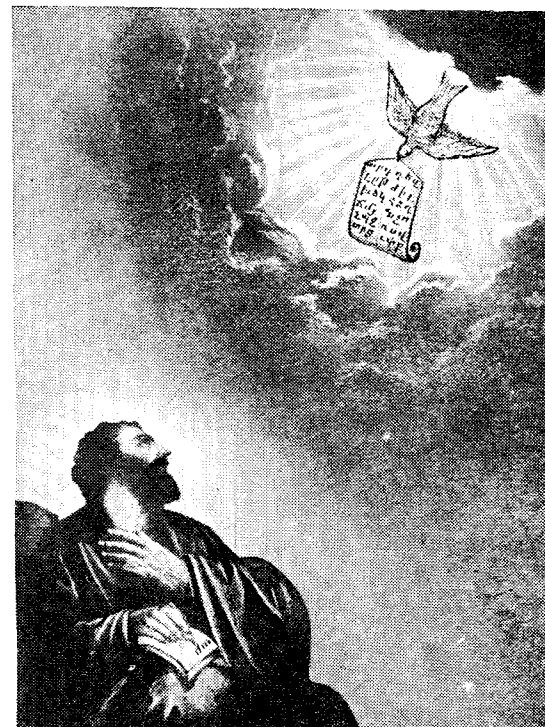
In the morning the naharars, including both Vartan Mamikonian and Vasak Siuni, the leaders of the two factions, took part in the worship of the sun and announced their conversion into Mazdaism. The



king was more than pleased with the success of his plan and lavished upon the Armenians precious gifts before sending them back to their country.

Subsequent events soon came to prove that this show of apostasy on the part of the Armenian aristocracy was simply a ruse to escape from the trap Yezdigirt had set for them. For as soon as they set foot into Armenia, they expressed their resentment by massacring the mazdaic priests who were coming with them as missionaries to establish the Persian faith. It is doubtful whether such a serious step could be taken by the common people without the knowledge or consent of the naharars, as contended by some historians. The nobility must have decided upon their course of action even when in Ctesiphon, for after hearing Yezdigirt there could have remained no doubt in their minds that he meant to abolish their special privileges and reduce the country into a Persian province.

All the ancient historians and most of the moderns have considered the events taking place in the middle of the fifth century as a popular outburst against the encroachment of the Persian king upon the freedom of conscience of the Armenians. It is true that there have been skeptics and dissenters with this theory, but the majority has held its ground. Scholars in recent times are devoting more attention to the clarification of the issues confronting the inhabitants of Armenia during this period, and they have succeeded in bringing out certain points which weaken the contention of the ancient writers and their modern followers. We will not, however, go into that



SAINT MESROP  
(The discoverer of Armenian Alphabet)

controversy, but content ourselves by presenting the course of events as handed down to us by the ancients, eliminating only the very obvious discrepancies or calling attention to them.

### THE REVOLT

The chief historians of this period, as we have already mentioned were two men, who by all indications were writing a partisan account of both the internal and the foreign affairs of the country. They both were members of the Greek party and under obligation to the Mamikonian family and the Armenian Church. It is unfortunate that no account, written from the point of view of the opposing camp, has been left to us. Having these facts in view we will present the old version of the revolts against Persia that took place in 450-451 A.D., and in 481-484 A.D., termed also as Vartanian rebellion and Vahanian rebellion respectively, after the leaders of the two movements — Vartan Mamikonian 2nd and Vahan Mamikonian. A third rebellion, which took place in 572 A.D., under the leadership of Vartan Mamikonian 3rd, we will treat separately.

Whether the real cause of the first rebellion was religious persecution or the curbing of the naharars' privileges or an attempt to regain their independence, it is an undisputed fact that it was not a unanimous movement. As a matter of fact the nobility were divided into two equal camps. We have no way of ascertaining beyond reasonable doubt even the motives

of those naharars who opposed the movement. Vasak Siuni, who was the leader of those who opposed the revolution, was himself accused and condemned in the end by the Persians for having conspired with other nations for the overthrow of the Iranian rule in Armenia. Some naharars no doubt opposed it as a hopeless and costly venture that could only cause misery and bring no benefits. If there were some who were actually sold out to the Persians, others might have been in the service of the Greeks. Personal animosities too might have caused some to determine their choice between the two factions.

The massacre of the magians precipitated the strife. Vasak, as the governor of the country, had either to join the ranks of the rebels openly or do his duty for the preservation of peace. He chose the latter course. This aroused the rebels against him and the struggle between the two Armenian factions became inevitable. The rebels at once put their forces into action and marched against the united army of the marzpan and the Persians. Three armies under the command of Vartan converged upon the magians and after making Vasak swear to join the rebel movement, they attacked the Persians who had fortified themselves in Zarehavan and succeeded in slaughtering them.

That the rebellion was a long planned movement and not a spontaneous outburst is also evident from the fact that the naharars had already made a secret treaty with the Georgians and the Albanians of the Caucasus for mutual assistance in the event of the rebellion. On the strength of this treaty the Albanians

asked the Armenians for immediate military aid against a Persian army which was ravaging that country. The Armenian forces were divided into three armies under the command of Vartan, Vasak and Arshavir Kamsarakan, the son-in-law of Vartan. At once Vartan betook himself with his troops into Albania and defeated the Persian troops without much difficulty. While still in the Caucasus, Vartan received word from Armenia that Vasak Siuni had apostatized once more and was molesting his countrymen. Vartan returned in all haste to find that the "tanuter" of Siunis had retired to his own possessions.

Vartan Mamikonian, having thus become the central figure of the rebellion, made an attempt to come to terms with the king of Iran by sending a captive Persian officer as a messenger to Ctesiphon and announcing through him that the Armenians will cease all acts of hostility if given religious freedom. Whereupon Yezdigirt, by a royal edict, declared a general amnesty and granted complete religious freedom to the Armenians. When the king's edict failed to satisfy the rebels, the Sassanian ruler decided to resort to force and in the following spring sent the old warrior Mihr-Nerseh with a large army to suppress the rebellion.

#### THE BATTLE OF AVARAIR

In the meantime Byzantium had not only refused to aid the rebels but had assured the Persian monarch that he had refused to give assistance to the

Armenians. Thus the rebels, left to their own resources, decided to resist to their last breath and feverishly made preparations to face the forces of Mihr-Nerseh. When the Persian army had arrived at the Armenian frontier, Vartan, realizing the hopelessness of his position, thought to save the country from the invasion of the powerful hostile army. Knowing that with his small forces he could not hope to withstand the attack of the Persians, he decided to fight his decisive battle before the enemy had penetrated into the country. So by forced marches he rushed his army of sixty-six thousand men south toward the Persian frontier until on the fifth day he came face to face with the enemy forces near the village of Avarair in the district of Ardaz.

The invading army, according to Armenian sources, was composed of 300,000 Persians, besides the sixty thousand Armenians under Vasak and the other apostate naharars and the troops of northern tribes. In addition the enemy army contained an elephant corps. But the fighting between the two uneven forces did not commence immediately. The Persian commander made every effort to persuade Vartan to come to terms and settle the matter peacefully. For fully a month pourparlers were carried on between the rebels and Mihr-Nerseh. But finally negotiations ended and on the first day of June, 451 A.D. the two armies faced each other upon the battlefield. The actual fighting started on the following morning and lasted the whole day. The Armenians fought desperately and bravely but were defeated by the superior army of Mihr-Nerseh. Vartan and most of

his lieutenants died upon the battlefield with the conviction that they were fighting for their religion and country. With the coming of nightfall the rebel army, having been left leaderless, retreated and scattered in the mountain fastnesses, engaging the advancing enemy army in guerrilla warfare and inflicting heavy losses upon them. The total loss of the Armenians was a little less than fourteen hundred killed.

### THE AFTERMATH

Thus came to an end the first national rebellion which, even though costly, secured for the Armenians freedom of conscience. For Yezdigert II, after the suppression of the rebellion, once more issued an edict, giving the Armenians freedom to choose their own religion.

In the spring of 452 Vasak Siuni and the other naharars of Armenia were brought up for trial in Ctesiphon for partaking in the rebellion against the King of Kings. Mihr-Nerseh himself presided over the proceedings, and the former marzpan was given every opportunity to defend himself. The accusations against him were many and came from both sides. The magians accused him as the instigator of the massacre of their missionaries in Zarehavan. Evidence was brought out that the Siuni "tanuter" had actually conspired against the sovereign and had made representations to the Byzantine emperor, to Georgia and Albania, as well as to naharars in western Armenia, seeking their aid for the overthrow of Persian rule over Armenia. Even members of his own family pro-

duced evidence that Vasak had made a secret treaty with the Huns, who were to attack the Persians in the event of a rebellion.

The weight of evidence against Vasak was so heavy that he was publicly disgraced by the Persian king and thrown into prison. His House was subjected to heavy fines which he could not pay with the accumulated treasures of his ancestors. After a long imprisonment in a Persian fort he died an inglorious death.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE AGE OF THE MARZPANS II

#### THE SECOND AND THIRD REBELLIONS

New Persian Policy.—Vahan Mamikonian and the Nationalists.—  
The Rebel Strategy.—Guerrilla Warfare.—The Treaty of Nuarsak.  
—The Third Rebellion.—Perso-Byzantine Wars.

With the death of Yezdigirt in 457 A.D. the Persian policy in regards to Armenia underwent a radical change. His son Peroz or Firuz, who succeeded him, put an end to the use of violence for converting the Armenians, and instead pursued the more subtle method of giving favors and important positions to those who voluntarily embraced mazdaism, and looking with disfavor on the Christians. Two years after his accession to the throne he pardoned the Armenian naharars, whom Yezdigirt had imprisoned, and placed them in his army. The captive noblemen were given their complete freedom after several years' service in the Persian cavalry and returned to their homes in 463.

The domoralizing policy of Peroz succeeded better in perverting the character of the Armenian nobility than the policy of violence his father had pursued. Persian customs and manners, as well as their religion began to penetrate into the country at an alarming rate. This condition of affairs revived the old factional spirit and the two parties once more became

active. The Church, as always, was on the side of the Greek faction, and the Catholicos Giut was their leader. This clergyman thought that only with the help of Byzantium could they rid themselves of Persian influence and he sent a secret mission to emperor Leo to secure his assistance. The Greek emperor turned a deaf ear to the appeal of the Armenians and the Catholicos, being betrayed to Peroz, was removed from his office.

The removal of the Catholicos was a boon to the cause of the nationalists. Redoubling their activities they began to arouse the people against the menace of Persian intervention in their national affairs. Especially were they fortunate in finding a new leader who was not only a great soldier, but a subtle diplomat and a far-sighted statesman. His name was Vahan Mamikonian, a nephew of the leader of the first rebellion, and the present "tanuter" of that famous family.

#### VAHAN MAMIKONIAN

Vahan was the eldest son of Hmayak Mamikonian, brother of Vartan. When still a boy he had been sent as a hostage to Ctesiphon during the first rebellion, but had been released through the efforts of his maternal uncle in 455 A.D. and returned to his mother, a refined and well educated woman who devoted herself to the education of her sons. As the eldest surviving male member of the Mamikonian family Vahan became the "tanuter." He had chosen a military career like all the members of his illustrious

family and through his great intelligence, as well as his administrative ability he had attracted the attention of the Persian court. In recognition of his valuable services the king of Iran had given him a high financial position in Armenia. This appointment caused indignation in the ranks of the Persian adherents who accused Vahan of being disloyal to the king. Peroz summoned him to Ctesiphon to answer the charges brought against him. While in Persia he "weakened in his faith," says a contemporary Armenian historian, meaning no doubt that he accepted the Persian religion.

Having made secure his position by his false apostasy Vahan Mamikonian began his secret activities for the overthrow of Persian rule in Armenia. He sent envoys to Constantinople to enlist the aid of the Greek emperor; he came to a secret understanding with the Georgians for mutual help in case of rebellion, and he began to make thorough preparations for a long struggle. He knew that the success of a rebellion depended more upon the loyalty and determination of his own followers than upon outside help, which might fail to come at the expected hour. Thus bending his efforts for every detail of the coming revolt he waited for a favorable moment to strike his blow.

The opportunity presented itself in 481 A.D., six years after his assuming the leadership of the nationalist party. The Persian army had been defeated by the Kushans and the king of Georgia had already given the signal for revolt. Vahan Mamikonian decided that the time had come and summoned his

followers to a great meeting where they all took the oath upon the Bible to fight for religion and political liberty and not to put down their arms until their aim was realized. Then they marched upon the city of Dwin, which had supplanted Valarshapat as the capital of the country, and capturing it without difficulty, formed a national government. Sahak Bagratuni was placed at the head of the revolutionary government, while Vahan Mamikonian was made the Commander-in-Chief of the national forces. In the meantime the Persian marzpan, having been informed beforehand of the impending revolt, had fled with his Iranian troops into the Persian province of Atrbatacan, leaving the country in the hands of the rebel leaders.

#### THE STRATEGY OF VAHAN

The leader of the second rebellion knew well that the only chance of success for him lay in engaging the enemy forces in guerrilla warfare. He had neither the resources nor the man power to cope with the mighty army that Persia could put into the field. By avoiding to fight a pitched battle against the well organized forces of a great power he not only could conserve his small army, but could wear down the enemy's morale. In this plan the terrain was his natural ally, presenting for his bands both the opportunity of a sudden attack and a way of easy escape. It was because of this strategy that he succeeded in carrying on the struggle for more than three years.

The whole period of the second rebellion is covered with such guerrilla encounters, where bands of several hundred rebels inflicted heavy losses upon entrapped army divisions. The first of these encounters took place soon after the flight of the marzpan, who fearing the wrath of his sovereign made a hasty return to Armenia with an army of seven thousand men. One of the Armenian bands, under the command of Vahan Mamikonian's brother Vasak, and composed of four hundred warriors, met the Persians at the foot of Mt. Massis, near the town of Acorri. The marzpan noticing the small contingent remarked disdainfully that they had "come to die foolishly." Without suspecting that he was being led into an ambushade the Iranian general attacked the Armenian band with disastrous result for himself and his army. The Persian commander was killed with many of his officers and the survivors fled in terror before the small band of the "foolish" rebels. It is asserted that the Armenians did not lose a single man in this initial engagement, which no doubt raised their morale and heartened those who were still hesitant to join the movement.

Peroz, who evidently had not taken the rebellion very seriously, was now aroused and in the spring of 482 A.D. sent a large army to suppress the insurgents. But the Armenian commander was awake to the situation and at once marched south with his bands to prevent the Persians from advancing into the heart of the country. The encounters between the army of Peroz and the rebel forces took place in the same district of Ardaz where thirty years earlier the de-

cisive battle of the first rebellion had been fought. With clever moves Vahan succeeded in decimating the enemy forces and routing them. The defeat of the Persians gave him a breathing spell, as the season was already well advanced and the enemy returned to its home grounds to hibernate.

The only defeat that Vahan Mamikonian suffered throughout the period of insurgency was inflicted upon him on foreign soil and as a result of treachery. It was Vachthang, the king of Georgia, who had previously made a secret alliance with the insurgents, that brought about the defeat of the Armenian leader. The perfidious Georgian sent word to Vahan in 482 A.D. that a Persian army had entered into his kingdom and had forced him to flee to the mountains at the Armenian frontier. He asked for assistance until the arrival of a large army of Huns, which, he said, would soon be there to fight on their side against the Persians.

Vahan himself went to Georgia at the head of a contingent soon to discover that he had been drawn into a well laid trap. The Armenians had advanced to the right bank of the river Kura expecting to join the friendly Huns when they found a Persian army of considerable size on the opposite bank. The enemy attacked at once and in spite of the heroic resistance of the Armenians the day was lost when Vachthang gave the signal for flight to his troops. The Armenians suffered heavy losses, leaving among the dead the intrepid Vasak Mamikonian and Sahak Bagratuni, the head of the national government.

Vahan Mamikonian returned to Armenia with

barely a hundred of his followers, closely pursued by the Persian commander. But instead of attacking the Armenians he began to negotiate with them for a peaceful settlement of the differences between the two countries. The negotiations, however, were interrupted by the sudden recall of the Persian army, leaving the rebels in control of the country.

### GUERRILLA WARFARE

The following spring another Persian army came to Armenia and caught the rebel leader off his guard. He was in Dwin when the Persians surrounded the city hoping to capture him. But it was not so easy to catch the slippery leader of the Armenian insurgents, and Vahan and his brave warriors succeeded in escaping the vicious ring the enemy had set around them.

Many small fights followed in which the Armenian commander attacked the enemy with very small bands, inflicted heavy losses upon them and retreated before they had time to recover from the surprise attack by the insurgents. Of these small encounters the battle of Shte was the most characteristic. After one of his nocturnal raids Vahan had retired into the village of Shte for rest, when the Persian commander, having learnt of his whereabouts came and surrounded the hamlet with his troops. The band was composed of one hundred men, but when in the morning they saw their predicament, many of them lost their nerves and counseled surrender. But Vahan would have none



of it. He told his men that he had determined to fight his way through and left them the choice of joining him or staying behind. Only forty ventured to face death with him in his daring attempt. Forty against four thousand Persians!

The fierce onslaught of the small band upon the unsuspecting enemy caused such confusion and panic among their ranks that the Armenians succeeded in clearing a passage through the human chain almost miraculously, with the loss of only four men. The enemy casualties, however, were staggering, as nearly half of their numbers were killed during the unexpected melee and confusion, according to an Armenian historian of that period. The Persian commander himself was so stunned by this inexplicable feat that he considered the Armenian leader as a legendary hero. While hesitating about his next step he received the news of the death of Peroz, who had fallen in a war with the Kushans, together with many of his generals. This disturbing news caused the Iranian general to hasten to Ctesiphon, leaving Vahan as the actual master of Armenia.

It was this same Persian officer, Shapuh Mihran, a Parthian of the Arsacid family, who spoke admiringly of Vahan Mamikonian to king Valarses, the brother and successor of Peroz. He advised the new ruler to make peace with the Armenian rebel leader, conceding the Armenians some of their demands. Valarses being a peace loving man, adopted a policy of conciliation and sent prince Nikhor with the mission of pacifying the Armenians. Crossing the frontier with an army the representative of Valarses sent

envoys to Vahan asking him to come to his camp for negotiations. The Armenian general did so, but only after he had asked for and received hostages from Nikhor.

### THE TREATY OF NUARSAK

The peace negotiations bore their fruit and by a treaty autonomy and religious freedom were once more restored in Armenia. In return, Vahan accepted the suzerainty of Valarses and Armenia was placed again, under Persian domination, after an insurgency of nearly three years. This is known as the Treaty of Nuarsak, after the name of the village in Armenia where the negotiations took place. The historical importance of this treaty is in the fact that this was the first international agreement whereby the freedom of conscience of a subject people was for the first time recognized by the ruling power. Furthermore it gave to the Armenians the much needed peace which was to last for nearly a century.

Soon after the treaty of Nuarsak the Armenians gave proof of their loyalty to the Persian sovereign by fighting bravely for king Valarses against a pretender to his throne. An Armenian contingent, sent to Persia for this purpose, distinguished itself in the fighting, winning the praise of the king. It was after the defeat of the pretender that Vahan Mamikonian presented himself to the Persian court at Ctesiphon for the ratification of the treaty of Nuarsak and was officially appointed by king Valarses as "tanuter" of his clan and as Commander-in-Chief of

the Armenian forces. With the pacification of Armenia a new marzpan was appointed in 484 A.D. After a year in office, however, the new military governor of Armenia recommended to the king the appointment of an Armenian as marzpan and suggested Vahan Mamikonian as the person best fitted for the position.

Thus the former rebel chief was made governor of Armenia in 485 A.D. much to the contentment of the people and he ruled over the country for twenty-five years wisely and justly.

### THE THIRD REBELLION

The new Persian policy of tolerance in Armenia underwent a change in 564 A.D. when Chosroes I of Persia appointed Suren the Parthian as marzpan. The new governor instituted a severe regime, causing dissatisfaction and unrest among the Armenians. Ancient authorities ascribe this change to the religious intolerance of Suren but the evidence in the case disproves this theory and shows conclusively that the Armenians were actually making preparations to overthrow Persian rule at the instigation of Byzantium. Justinus II, the Greek emperor, openly espoused the Armenian cause by declaring to the Persian ambassador: "I have taken the Armenians under my protection because they are our co-religionists, and if Chosroes annoys them, I will fight Chosroes with all the might of the Greek empire, depose him if necessary and replace him with another king."

The leader of the separatist movement in Armenia was Vartan Mamikonian 3rd. The movement caused

the reappearance of the old factions in Armenian politics. A secret mission was sent to Constantinople. Emperor Justinus received the envoys of Vartan cordially and promised them military aid against the Persians. In return Armenia was to be placed under Greek rule and was to pay a tribute of larger amount to Constantinople than the Persians received.

The separatists thus assured of outside aid were waiting for a pretext to open hostilities. The Persians themselves supplied the pretext when one day several officers attacked the Armenian Catholicos in the street and began to beat him. When the news of this assault spread in the city of Dvin the people lost their temper and attacked the Persians. Mobs began to form everywhere, shouting threats and assaulting every Persian they met. Vartan Mamikonian himself marched to Dvin from Ashtishat at the head of his followers and surrounded the palace of the marzpan. Nothing could save the helpless Iranians from the wrath of the furious mob. Those who escaped massacre were arrested and decapitated. All these events took place on the 30th day of March in the year 571 A.D.

The massacre of Dvin had grave consequences. The Georgians were the first to emulate the Armenians by rising in rebellion against Iran. Constantinople was elated and looked forward with expectancy to the recovery of her former possessions. Consternation reigned in Ctesiphon and the Persian officials were seized with a blind fury toward the Armenian rebels. Even Chosroes I, who had been sympathetic towards the Armenians, thought only of passing



THE HEROES OF AVARAIR  
(A painting by N. Giroto depicting the priest Chevont, Vartan Mamikonian and Eghishe the historian on the eve of the famous battle.)

through the sword all those responsible for the massacre of March.

With the coming of spring a large Persian army marched upon Armenia. Vartan Mamikonian was prepared to meet them. In addition to the troops of all the naharars, who worked in unison on this occasion, he had the forces of the Georgians, the Savirians and the Alans under his command. The two armies met in the valley of Calamach. The Armenians opened the attack upon an enemy whose strength was superior to theirs. But the better strategy of the Armenian commander and the faith of his followers in the justice of their cause more than balanced the numerical superiority of the Iranians. The ranks of the enemy army were broken under the fierce onslaught of the Christian allies. In the confusion that ensued many Persians perished, some were made prisoners and the rest fled in disorder.

Vartan Mamikonian knew well that his victory was only temporary, and that he could not resist the Persian might without the aid of the Greeks. Emperor Justinus, who had been generous with his promises, had not made a single move to come to the aid of the Armenians. The naharars, dismayed by the indifference of Constantinople, were becoming restless. It was imperative to strengthen the confidence of the insurgents before Iran could send a larger army to crush the rebellion. After considering every alternative Vartan decided to pay a visit to the emperor and plead with him personally to send an army into Armenia.

The reception accorded to Vartan by the Greek

emperor was more than cordial. The Armenian Commander-in-Chief was taken to the Church of St. Sophia in the company of Justinus, who on this occasion named one of the three entrances to the main altar of the famous cathedral the Armenian Door. He assured his visitor that the Christians could rest assured of his protection over them and that he was going to fight the Persians. This public announcement of the emperor was paramount to a declaration of war and the king of Iran, interpreting it as such, made preparations to meet his traditional enemy.

#### PERSO-BYZANTINE WAR

War between the Byzantine empire and Persia did follow the visit of Vartan Mamikonian to Constantinople. Marcianus was appointed generalissimo of the imperial legions, with the Armenian rebel leader as his assistant. In the meantime Chosroes appointed Bahram Chupin, an Arsacid of the Mihranian branch to the chief command of his armies and sent him against Armenia.

The war between the two old rivals continued for a long time, victory favoring now one now the other side. The Armenians fought bravely and covered themselves with glory, but Armenia bore the brunt of the war. As many battles were fought upon Armenian soil the country became devastated and the people suffered unspeakable horrors.

In 573 A.D. a large army of Chosroes, composed of one hundred thousand infantry and forty thousand

cavalry, inflicted several defeats upon the Greeks. Justinus became demented upon hearing of these reverses and Tiberius was entrusted with the imperial affairs as his deputy. New armies were sent to the East and the victorious advance of the Persians was obstructed. As no great victories were obtained by the Byzantines Tiberius lost his enthusiasm and began to negotiate for peace. The first condition of Chosroes for cessation of hostilities was the return of Armenia to him. The negotiations failed and Chosroes renewed his offensives with greater zest. Having already conquered Persian Armenia he advanced into western or Greek Armenia and arrived before Carin.

New negotiations failed again to bring results, as Tiberius, who had succeeded Justinus, accepted all but one of the conditions Chosroes had proposed. This was the delivery to Persians of Vartan Mamikonian, who was considered as the cause of all this bloodshed by the king of Iran.

The war continued and Tiberius once more sent Maurice, the Armenian, a famous general in the imperial army, to command the Greek legions. This time fortune smiled upon the Christian forces and Maurice, with the help of Vartan, inflicted a severe defeat upon Chosroes, who had come to supervise the fighting personally. The two Armenian generals succeeded in routing the ruler of Iran and in capturing his Queen of Queens in the year 578 A.D. The following year Chosroes died and the war came to a speedy end.

After the end of the third national rebellion Armenia remained under Persian rule for another sixty years. The Iranian rulers, however, had bene-

fitted by past experience and governed the country without oppression. They appointed Armenian governors or marzpons and gave the people no cause to resort to rebellion. Left in peace the country soon recovered from its desolation and once more became prosperous.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE GOLDEN AGE

The Hellenic Influence.—Culture and Christianity.—Early Writers. Sahak and Mesrop.—The Armenian Bible.—Eznik, Koriun, Eghishe, Lazar of Pharbe, Moses of Khorene.

The Golden Age of Armenian culture is in the fifth century of the Christian era. Paradoxically enough and in contrast to similar periods in the life of ancient peoples, the Armenian era of high culture came after the loss of political independence. As has been mentioned elsewhere in this book, even though the Persian domination over Armenia was not equivalent to an imposition of a repressive foreign rule over the people, still the fact remains that the country had lost its political independence, retaining, however, an autonomy. When compared in this light to the Augustan Age of Rome and the Periclean Age of Greece the contrast in the political conditions obtaining in all three countries at the time of their Golden Ages becomes very evident.

Large volumes are necessary to analyze the importance of this era in the life of the Armenian race. In the short space of a chapter it is not possible to give even a general picture of this period of intellectual attainment. We will therefore confine ourselves to giving some of the highlights of the great movement of cultural achievement in Armenia.

It has generally been asserted by Armenian

authors that the chief motive power that brought about the great age of enlightenment was the discovery of the Armenian alphabet. This is a half-truth and like most half-truths it is very misleading. The discovery of Armenian characters was the result of a long period of striving for culture. The movement in this direction had started long before the great accomplishment of Saint Mesrop, and without that movement there would have been no discoverer of alphabets.

### HELLENIC INFLUENCE

The earliest factor of this renaissance might be considered the conquest of western Asia by Alexander of Macedon. This brought Armenia under the influence of Hellenic culture for the first time. The Seleucid rule over Armenia became the nursery for the development of the Greek idea. King Artaxias I was the first and probably the most important direct factor for the spread of the movement among his people. This king would probably have been considered a half-barbarian by the refined Greeks, but he knew the value of their great contribution to human progress, even though he could not completely assimilate it.

Tigranes the Great was fanatical in his zeal to instill the culture of the Hellenes among his subjects, although he never understood it. He was an oriental to the core and he remained a product of the East in spite of his untiring efforts to westernize his kingdom. His son Artavazd was just the opposite, and his failure may be ascribed to his over-refinement in an

environment that required more physical than intellectual force. This unfortunate king was born four hundred years too early, for if he had lived during the lifetime of Catholicos Sahak he might have become the brightest star in the constellation of the Armenian Golden Age.

With the coming of the Arsacid kings a new factor entered into Armenian cultural life. The Parthians, like the Armenians, were under Greek influence to a considerable extent. And yet they were more oriental than their kindred race on their western frontier. The new dynasty contributed a new element in the civilization of Armenia, without impairing the Greek idea. Tiridates I, who was crowned in Rome, went to the eternal city through Asia Minor and Greece. He saw with sympathetic eyes the fine culture that the Hellenic mind had produced. In Rome he saw a different picture. Here the Greek idea had been adopted by a people who were physically strong but far from the refinement of the Hellenes.

With Armenia under Roman influence for more than three hundred years the westernization of the people continued unabated. The rise of the Sassanians in Persia and the growth of that country into a world power of first magnitude may have retarded the trend of Armenian culture toward the west but never stopped it. The Armenian people had now been too long under Hellenic influence to be easily diverted into new channels.

The official adoption of Christianity in Armenia might be considered the climax of the movement. It is indeed hard to conceive a Christianized Armenia

without first having a Hellenized Armenia. As we have already seen Armenian paganism was more or less a replica of Greek paganism, with the difference that it was nationalized. And so was Christianity nationalized in Armenia.

### CULTURE AND CHRISTIANITY

That the Greek thought and the Greek culture had penetrated into Armenia more deeply than some scholars would like to concede, can be proved by the fact that Christianity spread only among peoples who were nurtured on Greek culture. Among the Near Eastern races the Armenians (and the Georgians who were under Armenian cultural influence) were the only people who adopted Christianity and remained faithful to it. The Jews, among whom the Nazarene was born, remained aloof from the new faith. The Arabs developed another religion, not suited to the Hellenic mentality. The Persians proved immune to the new religion even though Christian missionaries made great efforts to win them to the principles of Christ.

On the other hand we know that early Christianity found the Greek cities of Asia Minor as well as other Hellenized communities in the East as the best field for their activities. The Apostle preached to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Thessalonians, and to the Romans, building for them churches and thus making Christianity the dominant religion of all Hellenized peoples.

Tiridates III was brought up in Rome, under the care of imperial guardians, receiving the education and outlook on life of a Roman of high birth. And it

was this king that accepted Christianity as the state religion. It is doubtful if Saint Gregory could convert a people having a different culture, even if he had performed stranger and more numerous miracles than he is purported to have done in Armenia. Both Saint Gregory and Tiridates III were products of the Hellenic civilization and that fact might account for their becoming the champions of the new faith.

Soon after the adoption of Christianity, which seems to have come as a supplement of Hellenism, and after the death of Saint Gregory, the period of expression dawned over Armenia. For beginning with the first penetration of Greek culture up to the adoption of Christianity, for over six hundred years, it had been a period of absorption for the Armenians. Like a jug placed under running water to be filled, the Armenians attained the state of fulness at the time of the Illuminator and they began to overflow soon after that.

Thus in the fourth century of the Christian era we find this urge for expression making its appearance in Armenia. The Armenians, however, were still without an alphabet so that the overflowing thought and emotions could be expressed only in one of the two languages which had been accepted as the mediums of cultural exposition. For that reason the two Armenian historians of the fourth century wrote in one of these languages.

These two writers were Agathangelos, who professes himself to be a Roman and the secretary of Tiridates III, and Phaustus of Byzand, a self-styled Greek. That both these men were Armenians is gen-

erally accepted by most authorities, although they wrote in either Greek or in Assyrian. They both preserved in writing the history of their times, which have come down to us in their Armenian translations. Agathangelos wrote about Chosroes, Tiridates and Saint Gregory, while the work of Phaustus starts with Chosroes II, and covers the period up to the partition of Armenia in 384 A.D. Agathangelos is also the best authority on Armenian paganism.

### SAHAK AND MESROP

The Armenians had now come to the stage where the urge for expression had become so strong that a medium had to be found. Both Greek and Assyrian languages were after all foreign tongues and could not serve as a means for a true interpretation of Armenian aspirations. It was therefore imperative to discover a medium suited to the national needs and the national urge. The Catholicos of the time, a man of great learning and a scholar of first magnitude, felt the need and set for himself the duty of supplying it. Catholicos Sahak had devoted much time to the question of education which fell under his jurisdiction. Many bright and promising young men had been sent to Athens, Alexandria, Antioch, Edessa, Constantinople, and even Rome to complete their education in these great centers of learning of the ancient world. These young people, who took their work seriously, devoted their talents to the elevation of their people. They became great scholars and teachers, and chose their careers in the service of the Church.



Among these scholars there was one Mesrop, from the province of Taraun, who had specialized in the field of languages. In his youth he had studied under Catholicos Nerses but had later chosen a military career. The love of letters, however, was too strong for him, so that at the age of twenty-five he resigned from the army and became a monk. The Catholicos, impressed by the ability and seriousness of the young clergyman entrusted to him the difficult task of preparing an alphabet for the Armenian language.

Mesrop delved into the great task whole-heartedly. With untiring efforts he began to study the Armenian language and its dialects, comparing it with other languages, noting the requirements for symbols needed, studying various alphabets and their use in different languages and diligently preparing a new alphabet. Like all great thinkers he retired at times into solitude and meditation. In one of his solitary retirements in Edessa he finally succeeded in perfecting the new alphabet for the Armenian language, and submitted it to Catholicos Sahak in the year 406 A.D.

Here too the Armenian mind showed its affinity to the European rather than to the oriental thinking. The languages of the East are written from right to left and they are devoid of vowels, using special marks over the characters to denote the sound of the vowel required. The Mesrobian alphabet followed the Greek system of writing, from left to right and contained a separate symbol for each of the vowels.

When Mesrop returned to Armenia with the new alphabet he was received like a conquering hero.

Catholicos Sahak at once began to make use of the new characters. A wave of enthusiasm swept over the land and the youth began to receive their education in the mother tongue.

One of the first concerns of the scholarly Catholicos was the translation of the Bible into the Armenian language. With the help and co-operation of Mesrop and Eznik of Colb, Saint Sahak devoted himself to this task. Using the "most authentic versions" of the great book the translation was made from Greek and Assyrian texts in such a beautiful language that it has been justly called the "Queen of all translations." Having started with such great zeal and enthusiasm the movement increased in volume and intensity thus producing the Golden Age toward the middle of the fifth century.

### THE AUTHORS

Some of the best known writers of the Golden Age and a short biographical sketch of each is presented below.

**Eznik.**—He was a contemporary and an intimate friend of Sahak and Mesrop. As a great scholar he was renowned throughout the intellectual world of his time. He had perfect mastery over five languages—Armenian, Greek, Persian, Hebrew and Assyrian—and was of great help in the translation of the Bible. This first Armenian translation in addition to its great beauty of language is considered the most authoritative version of the Bible as the translators had spared no painstaking effort to make it the most authentic.

**Koriun.**—As one of the students of Sahak and Mesrop, Koriun was sent to Byzantium, where he devoted his time to the study of the Greek language and Greek literature. Like all his contemporaries he made many translations into the Armenian, as the demand for reading matter was great and there was nothing in the mother tongue to satisfy the thirst for knowledge on the part of the new generation. Through these translations many valuable books of the ancients have been preserved for humanity, as with the destruction of the great library of Alexandria every trace of these books would have been completely lost, were it not for the Armenian translations. Eznik's biography of St. Mesrop is not only a masterpiece but sheds light upon the literary activities of the Golden Age. It is generally believed that Koriun was the translator of the histories of Agathangelos and of Phaustus. He is no doubt one of the greatest figures of the Golden Age.

**Eghishe.**—Eghishe or Elisee was the secretary of Vartan Mamikonian 2nd, the leader of the first rebellion against Persia, and belonged to the first generation that came into existence after the discovery of the alphabet. After having completed his studies in Armenia he went to Edessa, Palestine, Alexandria, Rome, Athens and Constantinople to acquaint himself with the advanced knowledge of these educational centers. In the year 458 A.D., six years after the suppression of the first rebellion, he wrote his "Vartan and the Armenian War," which is more like an epic poem than a dry historical narrative. Even though written in prose it is essentially poetic both

in conception and presentation. His other works are in conception and presentation.

**Lazar of Pharbe.**—Born in the year 440 A.D. Lazar of Pharbe was brought up with Vahan Mamikonian and received his schooling with the famous leader of the second rebellion in the mansion of a Georgian nobleman, a relative of the Mamikonians. He went to Greece in search of a higher education and distinguished himself in oratory. Returning to his native land he lived for a while with the Kamsarakan family but soon being tired of worldly affairs became a hermit. His boyhood friend Vahan Mamikonian, who probably was a distant cousin, brought him back into the secular field by appointing him the supervisor of the Cathedral at Echmiadsin. At the request of his friend and benefactor he wrote a "History of the Armenians" which is one of the most valuable sources about the past of the race.

**Moses of Khorene.**—Undoubtedly the greatest of the ancient Armenian writers, Moses of Khorene has been subjected to more abuse than any other writer of antiquity. As the controversy about the "father of Armenian historians" is still raging we will content ourselves by stating that until recent times he was considered by all scholars to have been one of the luminaries of the Golden Age. In later years, however, some scholars have asserted emphatically that Moses of Khorene lived and wrote at a much later period. Until this point is definitely settled the "Armenian Herodotus" must remain in the company of the fifth century authors.

"The Armenian History" of Moses of Khorene,

purported to have been written in 480 A.D. at the request of Sahak Bagratuni, contains many legends which had come down by tradition to the time its author lived. Even if the authenticity of the book were doubtful as to the dates and names, its great value as a collection of priceless folk-lore can never be under-estimated. Besides the events recorded by this immortal author have been substantiated by many direct and indirect evidences discovered centuries after Khorene's death.

Moses of Khorene is recognized and esteemed by scholars world over as one of the Armenians who have made a definite and lasting contribution to the civilization of mankind. His history remains a great monument doing honor not only to him but to the race that gave him birth.

There were many other writers, orators, preachers and religious leaders who toiled incessantly in this great era and enriched the culture of the Armenian people by their ceaseless efforts. But the political activities of the naharars, with their plottings and their squabbles, brought the country into troublous times so that literature and arts, and all kinds of intellectual pursuits were subordinated to political exigencies. Thus the fires of the Armenian renaissance gradually smoldered and were buried under ashes for several generations, until they were once more enkindled under a new dynasty in the ninth century.

END OF VOLUME ONE